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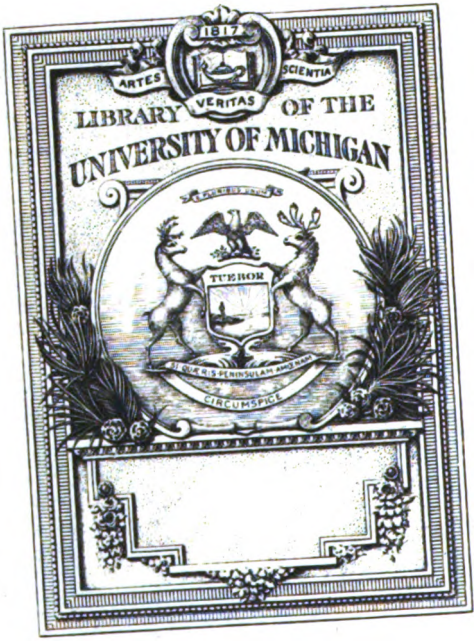


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General Louis Botha

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GENERAL LOUIS BOTHA

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General Botha in Paris, 1919
From a painting by Sir William Orpen

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GENERAL
LOUIS BOTHA

BY
DR F. V. ENGELENBURG
Editor of "Die Volkstem" Pretoria

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY THE
RIGHT HON. GENERAL J. C. SMUTS

AND PORTRAITS MAPS AND OTHER
ILLUSTRATIONS



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PREFACE TO THE ORIGINAL (AFRIKAANS) EDITION

L. S.

How many prominent people, popular enough in their time, are remembered even a few years after their death? How much of the life's work of even the most famous men survives them by as much as a century?

The tenth anniversary of General Louis Botha's death is approaching. And yet his people, I believe, have not completely forgotten him! His figure forms an integral part of our own period in South Africa's evolution; it cannot be done without, just at present.

For the matter of that, Louis Botha appears destined for a permanent niche in the national memory. In his lifetime he was perhaps all too great for our respectable little nation. He stood in the way of several of his contemporaries, scandalizing them by his unconventional conception of patriotism.

Future generations may appreciate him better, or, rather, more universally. It is true that the public of posterity will not differ essentially from the public of to-day—the level of which is known to pretty well everybody—but it will have the advantage of seeing Botha's ideal circulate among the crowd as everyday, current coin of the realm. We need not concern ourselves about his future fame. Subsequent generations have better opportunities than are vouchsafed to contemporaries for getting to know who was really and truly a benefactor to his people.

Let us, then, concentrate on establishing Botha's reputation in our own day. Great is the number of those South Africans who supported him during his lifetime, and whose heads as well as hearts are still doing their best to propagate

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the gospel that was his. Many others, again, either knew but little of him, or did not know him at all. Maybe the desire to know what manner of man Botha was is felt by adherents as well as those others.

I cannot be expected to satisfy this desire in every way. Few persons to-day can hit on the correct perspective for a definite judgment of Botha's accomplishments. All of us, however, feel that these were uncommonly great. I have suffered from the disability—and, thank God, I had the privilege—of knowing Botha intimately since his entry into public life. Our ages were approximately the same, and as a journalist I was drawn into personal contact with him; this, in the end, ripened into friendship. Thus I lack the capacity, considered by some indispensable to the true biographer, for the total repression of the last vestige of either esteem or contempt toward the object of description. I simply cannot get away from my respect, my admiration, for Botha.

Owing to my long relations with him, a number of statements in these pages rest not on documentary evidence, but merely on individual recollection, which affects their value. In the nature of things, many an official source of information remained closed to me.

Special attention was given by me, here and there, to biographical detail such as most authors either ignore or evade. Every moment in a great man's life, however, belongs to his fellow human beings. Public interest in every aspect of his activity is the national hero's glory . . . and his cross!

To the Honourable the Prime Minister, General J. B. M. Hertzog, my respectful thanks are due for his permission to avail myself of certain documents from the Archives. I likewise thank all those who placed valuable material or useful advice at my disposal. My special thanks to Mr Paul Ribbink, librarian of Parliament at Capetown, for his great assistance.

F. V. ENGELENBURG

PRETORIA
March 1928

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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

THE favourable reception given by my compatriots to the original edition of this work induces sanguine anticipations as to the probable fate of an English version which is destined to reach not only my English-speaking fellow South Africans, but an overseas public as well. Botha's career not merely drew attention outside of his country; it appreciably affected other nations. His name commanded respect among people and races not usually susceptible to appreciation of such foreign individuals as have not identified themselves with their own spiritual existence.

He himself never grasped the scope of his fame, first as a soldier and subsequently as a statesman. He did, it is true, jocularly state once—when, accompanied by his wife, he was looking at an equestrian statue—that, if ever it fell to his lot to have his effigy placed on a pedestal, he would like it to be on horseback. The degree of his fame, however, left him indifferent. It was not in him to pose in front of the Press camera, or to take a hand in the construction of his own particular apartment in the house of fame. Rather was he one of those who are apt to give—give unstintingly and lastingly without claiming applause in exchange.

Its English garb will enable my poor attempt at biography to circulate in a wider realm than the original edition could ever enter. How I should rejoice if in a dozen languages books could be produced that would be the means of bringing the memory of this great South African closer to our own generation!

Six chapters of this book have received the distinction of being published in the South African *Argus* newspapers.

F. V. E.

PRETORIA
January 1929

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INTRODUCTION

I GLADLY consent to Dr Engelenburg's request that I should write a few lines of introduction to his book on General Botha. I have not seen the book in its English dress, but in the Afrikaans original it appeared to me a fair, reasonable, and true picture of the man who more than any other dominated the South African stage for the first two decades of this century. With Lord Buxton's earlier work it will probably remain for years the authoritative presentation of General Botha. In time, no doubt, with the lapse of years and the passing of this generation, the larger Botha will emerge, the great romance of his life and his work will stand out above the level into which the lesser actors and their performance will have sunk. His colossal figure will then appear in its true historic proportions, and new biographers will arise to tell the wonder of it all. But we of his own generation who have personally known him have also a duty to perform, and are bound to give our impressions, even if they serve only as rough material for the biographers to come. Dr Engelenburg, from his long and close personal acquaintance with General Botha, has very special qualifications for the task which I and others have urged him to undertake and which he has discharged in this work with great competence.

Perhaps I may also be allowed in this foreword to give a brief personal impression of a friend whom I knew well for twenty-one years, during most of which we were associated in our work and our lives in a way which cannot but be rare among men. I knew him not only in the ordinary ways of living and working together, but far more intimately. Together as friends and comrades we passed through the gravest crises of our lives; together we had to take the most fateful decisions. I saw him under the most

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severe tests that can be applied to a human being—tests which would have revealed and brought out any flaws in his inner composition. And it is the way he stood all these tests and showed real greatness of soul that has made him quite outstanding in my memories of the great men whom I have known and worked with. I am not going to discuss here the intimacies of his inner life, but to refer very briefly to some of his qualities which flowed from that inner greatness and struck the world at large.

His natural tact was very beautiful, and indeed struck everybody with whom he came into contact. But in his case tact was not mere superficial form or manner. With him it was the expression of an innate sympathy which was probably the deepest and richest element in his make-up. I have never in any other man seen such a fine power of sympathy. His sympathy made it possible for him to get extremely close to others and to read their minds and divine their characters with marvellous accuracy. It almost amounted to a gift of divination as far as character was concerned. It gave him an intuitive power of understanding and appreciating men which was very rare. I remember many an occasion when he sized up a person in a way which at the time struck me as somewhat forced or fanciful, but which the experience of after years showed to have been perfectly right. Sympathy with him sprang from unusual intuitive insight into the character and motives of those with whom he came into contact, and his reading of men was in many ways the surest I have ever seen. He read friends and opponents alike as an open book. This is a very uncommon and precious endowment. Great men are often wanting in knowledge of human nature and are taken in by quite commonplace scoundrels. Much of their work is often spoiled by a false trust in those who are unworthy of it. I never heard of anybody taking in Botha; and this not because of any analytic power of dissecting motives and qualities, but because of his sympathetic insight, which seldom proved wrong. His knowledge of human nature was as profound as his sympathy, and sprang from it. But

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it was more than knowledge. It had that emotional touch which made him truly human, and endeared him to his friends, and gave him his personal magnetism. With him you felt instinctively at ease; he inspired those who surrounded him with confidence and devotion. And this sympathetic bond gave him a power over men much greater than any other form of superiority could possibly have given. To understand and love as he did, to evoke love and trust as he did, is indeed the finest power which can be wielded by men. This power he had, a power which reached the very souls of people, and did not merely affect their superficial behaviour.

This sympathetic power not only meant great power but also great pain to him. It meant that he was abnormally sensitive. He had not that thick hide which is supposed to protect the public man against the rebuffs and insults of his unpleasant profession. Politicians should be pachyderms. Public life for him meant not only the supreme enjoyment of achievement but the continual agony of misunderstandings, of differences with friends and associates, of hideously unfair and wounding criticism of which he had an abundant measure. On those whom the gods love they lavish infinite joys and infinite sorrows. He had his full measure of both. His place is in the most select list of the great statesmen and men of action that South Africa has produced. In that list he will in the future probably be accorded the first place. Great as soldier and as statesman, the leader of the Transvaal through the Boer War, the architect above all others of the Union of South Africa, the saviour of his people and its honour in 1914, his achievement is indeed unique. The simple Boer boy of the veld who rose by sheer power of personality and performance to be one of the foremost figures at the Paris Peace Conference has indeed established a record which would be hard to beat. But this great man of action had the tenderest feelings and the most sensitive soul. He combined the strength of a man with the extreme sensitiveness of a woman. A stupid letter of a friend would cause him sleepless nights;

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an undeserved criticism or insult would inflict pain far beyond what was probably intended. His power of sympathy was not only a powerful weapon, but it left him unprotected and exposed to a degree which would be considered almost unbelievable. It was this blending of great power with extreme sensitiveness which made him a supreme friend. Great as soldier, greater as statesman, he was greatest as friend by right of his sheer humanity and sympathy.

What was the religion of such a man? What could it be but the religion of all truly great men? He had his roots deep in the invisible. The human sympathy which bound him to his fellows was one with his deepest contacts with the unseen. All great spirits live by the same fundamental Faith. Most difficult of all to formulate and express, it is yet the truest reality of their lives. Botha certainly never attempted to express it. He observed the ordinary forms of religion, and was in every respect irreproachable in his moral and social habits. But there was always something more which his intimates were conscious of. He did not wear his heart on his sleeve, and seldom spoke openly about religious matters. But in the background was this fundamental faith, and on certain testing occasions it revealed itself visibly in his behaviour. One was at Pretoria the Sunday after the signing (late on a Saturday night) of the Vereeniging Peace Treaty which ended the Anglo-Boer War. He was labouring under almost uncontrollable emotion which it was most painful to witness; and yet through the storms and the wreckage of war and the despair of the terrible ending there was heard the still small voice, speaking of simple faith and trust in the Providence which invisibly guides the fortunes of men. Then there was another occasion (referred to in this book) at the beginning of the Great War, when the rebellion among his Boer comrades was on the point of breaking out, and he with myself and a couple of friends were striving far into the night to persuade General de la Rey to keep out of the mischief that was afoot and to use his great influence against it. General de la Rey—one of the whitest and noblest souls that ever

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lived—was labouring under a deep religious impulse which made him hear the call of God for the release of the Boer people from the bondage imposed upon them at Vereeniging. The argument with him therefore necessarily took a religious turn, and it went on for a long time, until Botha at last said to de la Rey (calling him by the affectionate name which we all used for him), "Oom Koos, it may be the will of God that this nation shall be free and independent. But nothing will ever convince me that it is the will of God that this shall be brought about through treachery and dishonour." And more to that effect; his very language at the time reminding me of one of the greatest passages in the Book of Job. Then there is the third and last occasion when, at the signing of the Versailles Treaty on the very day when the Vereeniging Peace had been signed, his memories of that awful moment blended with pity for the Germans at the Punic peace which was being imposed on them, and he penned those well-known lines which in their ruggedness and intensity of feeling are almost untranslatable, and which now hang in the Prime Minister's room at the Union Buildings in Pretoria: "God's laws shall be imposed on all peoples with justice under the new sun; and we shall continue to pray that they will be applied to mankind in love and peace and Christian charity. To-day I think of the 31st May, 1902." At that moment, when jubilation filled all hearts, he heard the undertone of the ages and felt only the deepest pity for the fate of human kind. He felt the present whole with the past and the future, and he saw the vision of God Who in His infinite mercy and pity washes out for ever the sins of this poor world and writes forgiveness over it all. His attitude that day was a revelation of what was deepest in him, and also of what to me seems to be the essence of all religious feeling.

There are men whose largeness of soul forms a solvent for the pettinesses of the world; who in their breadth of humanity and sympathy reconcile the differences which divide their fellows; creative souls who, out of the rough material of the passions and self-interests, the party cries

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and sectional strivings of those who surround them, achieve the comprehensive syntheses of a larger national life; who really make a people, place fresh view-points before them, and lead them out of the bitterness and sufferings of the past into the warm, glad light of larger ideals and visions. These are the rare God-like leaders, and of such was Louis Botha. What South Africa owes to him it will only gradually realize with the years, as the creative seed he has sown sprouts and bears fruit in the coming of the united nation for which he poured out his soul.

J. C. SMUTS

CAPETOWN
February 1929

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I

BOTHA'S YOUTH

DURING the winter of 1883 a family council was held at Klipplaat, a stock-farm in Vrede, N.E. Orange Free State. Thirteen brothers and sisters had met in connexion with the distribution of the estate of their deceased father, which was being liquidated. They lived in scattered districts; their ages varied considerably. Naturally, they felt a little strange toward each other. The elder sisters were married and were represented by their respective husbands. Right at the commencement of their deliberations one of the sons proposed to leave the estate undivided; as for the management, he would see to that. Responsibility, he argued, was nothing new to him. He was used to exercising initiative, and during the father's declining years (the old man's health had not been robust) he had practically managed the farm. Would it not pay all concerned to refrain from breaking up the property?

The son who sprang this rather extraordinary proposal on the family council was not yet twenty-one years old. About one-half of his brothers and sisters were his seniors. It is not strange that the scheme was not enthusiastically received, especially by the elder ones. They suspected it as being either too risky or an undesirable departure from established custom. No, they were going to divide.

The young man felt hurt. Touched in his pride as a capable cattle-rancher, disappointed by the business decisions of his relatives (of which he disapproved), Louis Botha gave orders to inspan the waggon that formed part of his inheritance. A brief adieu, and off he went to Natal, accompanied by a younger brother. He was able to bear the knowledge that others under-estimated his ability with undiminished

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pride; confidence in his own powers and enterprise were his in full measure.

The unaccommodating attitude of his relations cost the Free State an energetic and able sheep farmer, who would no doubt have made a name for himself as a progressive country member of the Bloemfontein Volksraad. As to South Africa, it had occasion to be grateful to the domestic event that decided the fate of one of its greatest sons.

Louis Botha's ancestors came (according to evidence to be found in the old Cape Archives) from Thuringia in Central Germany. Round about 1678 Friedrich Boot, or Botha, arrived at the Cape at the age of twenty-two. He was a soldier in the service of the Dutch East India Company. Born at Wangenheim, a hamlet north of Gotha, he belonged to the Slavonic race, the brachycephalous appearance of which survives in his offspring. In 1682 he obtained his discharge, and henceforth lived as a free burgher. Probably he sprang from peasant stock, for he spent the rest of his life on the soil.

The Company's records always mention him as Boot. One of his signatures, dated 1692, reads 'Friederich Both'; another, of the year 1709, and obviously written by the same person, reads 'Friederich Botha.' Several of his descendants called themselves 'Both' and 'Boota,' which is a spelling found in church registers. 'F. Boot' is one of the first South Africans who farmed under the French *métairie* system: in 1686 he undertook to till another man's soil, in the Stellenbosch district, in return for one-fourth the crop. His work had a romantic sequel. The landlord had, a few years before, married a youthful second wife, who transferred her affections *in toto* to the tenant, now a man of thirty. Twenty years after, the courts had a divorce case before them, and the documents show that both the respondent and the co-respondent were not afraid of strong measures when these were thought necessary.

The co-respondent, in spite of his irregular domestic affairs, was *persona grata* with authority, as appears from his ownership of Sandberg, a mountain farm in Stellenbosch.

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In 1717 a proper marriage regularized his relations with his housewife.

Early in the eighteenth century Swellendam was invaded by cattle farmers; Bothas were among the first contingent. From time to time members of the family pushed farther inland, until they reached what is now known as the Eastern Province. Several of them occupied public posts, such as that of *heemraad*, burgher officer, and commandant.

Mr Graham Botha, Chief Archivist at the Cape, states:

> Another Botha family exists, descendants of a French *réfugié* called Boudier, who at one time lived in Germany under the name of Bode. One of his progeny enlisted with the E.I. Company at Amsterdam in 1766. At his own request he was sent to a military post in Swellendam, where Bothas were then established. In that way his name became assimilated to that of the Bothas. After his discharge he went to live at Capetown. The Boudier-Bothas have produced theologians and other *savants*—also a ship's captain, who took part in the *Voortrek* to Natal, and ultimately settled in the Transvaal.

The Bothas to whom the subject of this biography belonged were country people heart and soul, genuine pioneers. This also applies to their womenfolk: Snymans, du Preez, Fouries, Steyns, and van Rooyens. One of the old Bothas was twice married, and had twenty children in all; one of his brothers boasted sixteen. General Botha's grandfather, Philip Rudolph, was the owner of a fine estate, De Kelder, at Bruintjeshoogte, as Somerset East was then called. Among the Voortrekkers he ranks with the Natal division.

This man's second son, Louis, was General Botha's father; he was born in 1829, and died on July 13, 1883, in Vrede. His life fell within the difficult period of transition in which the tracts that had been made just habitable by the Voortrekkers saw their occupants settle down into orderly communities. Old Botha was an active man who minded his own business and seldom interfered with that of others. Originally a Natalian, at De Rust, where his homestead may still be seen, he made his livelihood in the then prevailing

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fashion. Railways or markets there were none. Farmers had to cart their own wool and skins to some neighbouring village.

Later, Botha Senior went to live in Vrede, along the Free State road connecting Pretoria with Maritzburg. He was a prosperous stock-owner as things went in his day, and a patriot to boot. Toward the end of 1880 the First War of Independence broke out. Botha Senior made it his business to gather the maximum amount of ammunition. This he conveyed on his waggon to the Transvaal Boer headquarters at Heidelberg. It so happened that the weather was extremely changeable; the continuous journeys made in heavy rain undermined the constitution of the fifty-two-year-old patriot to such an extent that he became an invalid during the last couple of years of his life. He was a modest man, but as soon as he rose to speak where men were assembled others remained silent. Someone who knew him well tells me that he was gifted above the average, a lover of his country and a fluent speaker; it was worth while listening to his discourse; one would always notice people standing round him in order to hear what he had to say.

His wife, Salomina Adriana van Rooyen, was a lovable woman, esteemed by all her children as well as by the whole neighbourhood. Her father, Gerrit Reinier, came from Uitenhage, Cape Colony, but was a prominent man in the Natalia republic, possessing greater gifts of statesmanship than the average contemporary. In 1840 he accompanied Andries Pretorius on the long and fatiguing journey to the interior (Potchefstroom), where they induced Hendrik Potgieter to amalgamate all the territory occupied by Voortrekkers into one 'society.' This interesting as well as ambitious scheme was destined to be short-lived; it was three-quarters of a century later that one of van Rooyen's grandsons succeeded in unifying the whole of South Africa. It deserves to be remembered, however, that General Botha's maternal grandfather shared the initiative with Pretorius.

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Conducted by General Botha, I once visited the farm established by Gert Reinier van Rooyen amid an attractive mountain landscape in Utrecht and occupied until this day by his offspring. An imposing avenue of heavy eucalyptus leads to the homestead. In front of the house roses are prominent in the flower garden. Portraits of parents and grandparents hang on the drawing-room walls. During my short visit I did not meet any male van Rooyens. The female members of the family fitted in perfectly with the atmosphere of aristocratic quiet surrounding them. In those days the back veld of youthful South Africa did not contain many such scenes.

The birth of Louis Botha Junior, on September 27, 1862, followed conditions that are perhaps worth recording. Six children had preceded him in the home of his parents, close to Greytown, Natal. When number seven was almost due, the mother felt ill at ease, and preferred to go to another farm, closer to Greytown. There she was confined, and was attended to by the lady of the house, who was known to be a skilled nurse. Is it not likely that the personality of the as yet unborn babe was influenced by the mother's excited state?

As a child, young Louis accompanied his people on their trek to the high veld of the North-eastern Free State, which was at that time a rather inhospitable stretch of country. He was old enough to have his share in, and feel affected by, the surprises—pleasant and otherwise—inseparable from such a journey. Every camping-spot on the vast plains harboured its own tribulations. Louis gathered an amount of knowledge and experience—practical acquaintance with men, beasts, and things—such as never falls to the lot of youths whose attention is chiefly concentrated on matters of abstract science. He was intelligent, and although he never had more than an elementary education, he knew how to obtain the benefit of the best that his teachers, men and women, had to give.

The style of his written language (High Dutch) was first-class all the days of his life. He never received any English

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lessons of any kind. He acquired great facility in dealing with his fellow-man; he was never a bookman. Nearly all his time and mother-wit were wanted for the work on his father's farm. This schooling he easily turned to the greatest advantage. Gradually he developed into an exceptionally clever cattle-breeder; but a live young man had other things to think of in those days than woolled sheep and veld fires!

For many years hunting and the trade in ivory had provided a large number of Boers with their principal means of livelihood. Far away, in the wilds of Zoutpansberg, Schoemansdal became a flourishing business centre. As elephants grew scarcer, owing to the inroads of hunters, depression set in. In 1867 Schoemansdal had to be evacuated owing to the minatory attitude of the natives.

The same year witnessed the discovery of diamonds in the Free State. The prosperity of this young industry in a portion of the back country that had hitherto been neglected led to considerable liveliness within a few years. South Africa's quiet, and rather uninteresting, economy underwent a great change. The birth of Kimberley, leading as it did to political complications owing to the Cape's claims to diamondiferous Griqualand West, caused a series of sensations. Suddenly Free Staters, who had until then lived solitary, unknown lives, found themselves surrounded by all the unrest of a storm centre.

The fact that finally the diamond fields were annexed by Britain was, during the days of Botha's adolescence, a subject of daily conversation among the members of his family as well as visitors. This coincided with the gradual increase in the number of indentured Indians, imported as labourers in Natal, owing to which the 'Garden Colony' saw its economic foundations radically altered. In 1871 the first gold-mine was worked in the Northern Transvaal, where gold had already been discovered in 1836 by that great pioneer Louis Trichardt. The Eastern Transvaal was developed by sturdy prospectors, whose discoveries led to a considerable increase in the population and importance of

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the district. A wave of optimism swept over the sub-continent; farmers once more took courage.

There were but few Boers, however, among gold or diamond prospectors. The late Mr Merriman and the late Senator Moor both had practical experience of mining at Kimberley; but not one member of the virile Botha family felt tempted to tackle Mother Earth otherwise than agriculturally.

During the early part of 1877 Sir T. Shepstone passed a night with the Bothas. He was on his way from Maritzburg to Pretoria, *via* Van Reenens Pass, in order to annex the Transvaal. It is said that Botha Senior candidly voiced his strong objection to the intentions of the British. Louis Junior, then a boy of fifteen, was old enough to realize the significance of the occasion. No one, however, imagined at that time that the unwise annexation was destined to become the prelude to a chain of events that was to affect the fate of Great Britain, and even of the world. Three years afterward a short but sharp war between England and the South African Republic broke out. While Botha Senior went about collecting ammunition for the Transvaal Boers, Louis was kept busy attending to the farm; but this did not prevent him from doing his bit in the struggle. He found out that pro-British messengers used rowing-boats belonging to owners of land along the Vaal; and he did not rest until he had cut adrift every single pontoon and boat in his district. These he allowed to float down the river, in order to disorganize the British intelligence service.

About a year previously his courage and presence of mind had been demonstrated in Zululand. Being a young stalwart, he had been selected to trek his father's sheep down to winter grazing. He had been in charge of similar jobs before. This time Usibepu, Cetewayo's restive opponent, was on the warpath, rendering the country unsafe for passage. Early in 1879 the battles of Isandhlwana and Ulundi were fought. The excited natives murdered a missionary near Botha's camp, spreading panic among white and black.

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On the approach of Mapelo, one of Usibepu's captains, Botha's kaffir boys fled. Mapelo's warriors were soon engaged in collecting the Botha herd as booty. Botha, rifle in hand and six cartridges in reserve, sat looking on. With playful lack of forethought he had spent nearly the whole of his ammunition on small game and birds since leaving home. Mapelo knew him. With defiant gesture he came on, climbed the waggon and seated himself alongside the young farmer. The most impertinent language on his part was not able to disturb the other's equanimity. Botha spoke Zulu fluently; he calmly adduced such convincing arguments as to get Mapelo to order his subordinates not to molest either Botha himself or his stock and chattels. The young man thereupon gave the native chief a sheep to kill for his warriors.

Hardy, spare of body, Louis Botha was steeled by life in the open against cold as well as heat. He was an intrepid horseman and crack athlete, both. Among his people he was rated an expert musician, because he played the concertina well. Good-humoured and with a gentle manner, he was able to inspire confidence by his demeanour. Violet-blue eyes and an engaging smile were unmistakable ornaments of his frank countenance. Quick-witted, he loved a joke. Being fond of a friendly argument, he disliked solitude. His youth was sunny; he was the seventh among thirteen children, who assisted in rearing and educating one another. He never required to sit for an examination!

Neither domestic sorrow nor any spiritual or physical inferiority complex, never a wild ambition, gnawed at his heart in these years. No heartache had him in its enervating grip. Sanguine, poor, but well equipped for the struggle of life, the gifted young farmer entered upon his independent career full of high spirits. Rare gifts alone are not sufficient to entitle their possessor to the respect of the world. It is the way in which he applies them that will fix his niche in history. In less than twenty years Botha became world-famous as a national leader and a soldier. The epos of his heroic figure filled humanity with amazed

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admiration unto the farthest corners of the globe. The fifteen years of unremitting political, diplomatic, and military prowess that followed conferred on him the glory as well as the desecration that are the portion of every statesman standing head and shoulders above his contemporaries.

After the Peace of Vereeniging a great effort was called for if South Africa, dishevelled in every way, was to be rebuilt. The country waited for the Hercules that would dare to tackle and complete such a task. In Louis Botha it found its benefactor, who was to endow it with a new future, a lasting destiny.

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II

BOTHA IN ZULULAND

THE South African Republic was almost entirely surrounded by an international vacuum. Owing to treaty obligations, however, it was not entitled to round off its boundaries, except with the formal permission of Great Britain. That country had invented the "paramount power" formula in justification of its claim to maintain a monopoly in "pegging claims for posterity" wherever in South Africa energetic British subjects saw fit to do so. This inhibition notwithstanding, someone in 1883 hit on the idea of establishing baby States just outside the territory of the Republic. After a brief existence all of these asked of their own accord to be incorporated into the Transvaal body politic.

As a fact, they were amalgamated, entirely or in part, with the South African Republic. This took place with more or less goodwill and applause on the part of the British Government, which was not slow in annexing some fresh piece of territory under the designation of 'protectorate.' A pretext was never far to seek. The inhabitants, usually called 'filibusters' for the occasion, as well as restive indigenous tribes, had to be either protected or restrained—as the case might be. Stellaland and Land Goosen, which came into being on the western border of the Transvaal, enjoyed an ephemeral but hectic career, during which a semi-military Commissioner, sent out from England, had to cut a dash.

The most respectable specimen of a miniature boundary State was De Nieuwe Republiek (The New Republic), which, after going through its efflorescence south-east of the Transvaal, eventually vanished, owing to the identical

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process of amalgamation. In this region it became necessary to use the strong hand because the Zulus proved themselves unfitted to behave as law-abiding neighbours of a white South Africa.

Endless inter-tribal squabbles among the natives greatly inconvenienced the cattle farmers who had their winter veld in Zululand, in addition to which disturbances were caused within the Transvaal border owing to fugitives being pursued by their oppressors. The white man simply had to act; and in this way a miniature republic sprang up here as well, after the model of the two big sisters across the Berg. Its founders do not deserve being looked down upon as 'land grabbers.' As administrators they were superior to their Goosen and Stellaland colleagues.

From the very first their work was businesslike and efficient—the reverse of amateur government. Lucas Meyer, the President, had gathered administrative experience in a Government office; he knew how to exercise authority and bear responsibility. The State Secretary, Mr D. J. Esselen, was the son of a gifted German missionary. Himself a man of education and skill, he had not studied at Continental universities for nothing. Mr Henderson proved an energetic State Attorney throughout. There were others, too, men with a tradition to look up to, full of healthy energy, and able to gain the confidence of their fellows—Birkenstock, van Staden, von Levetzow, etc. I frequently met them at Pretoria when they came to take their seats in the Volksraad.

Lengthy, and often sanguinary, disputes raged among the Zulus. Finally the 'legitimists' under Dinizulu (son of Cetewayo) conquered the insurgents led by Usibepu. This they were able to do thanks to the assistance of some hundred whites under Lucas Meyer. Northern Zululand, as far as the Indian Ocean, was proclaimed a sovereign State; according to British usage, the rest of Zululand became a protectorate. At once this led to tension between the Government at Vryheid, the capital of the fledgling State, and the British authorities in the Natal capital.

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Matters mended in 1888, when the Colonial Office assented to the New Republic becoming merged in the Transvaal, all except the coastal strip at St Lucia Bay, which had meanwhile been painted red on the map. Willy-nilly the southern Zulus were added to the British Empire. The South African Republic meanwhile gained a well-governed district; and with it a citizen who before long would faithfully share with his people the most serious afflictions in order to lead them on to glory and deliverance.

Among the armed horsemen, pioneers of the New Republic, was Louis Botha. He was now twenty-two years old. After his exit from the family home he had come into contact with the prime movers in the Zululand adventure. In 1884 he joined the commando that entered native territory in defence of Dinizulu's prestige. The affair, which lasted a couple of months, was in no sense a picnic. He owed his life to the fact that he shot straight when a hot-headed Zulu, quite close to him, smashed the handle of his assegai in order to be able to use the shorter weapon more effectively against the young mounted Boer.

On May 21, 1884, Dinizulu was crowned as Zulu king in the presence of his white allies. Botha was there in his capacity as A.D.C. to the Boer Committee. On the 5th of the following month Usibepu was decisively defeated, so that, on August 16, the New Republic could be formally proclaimed. The day before, Botha had been made chairman of one of the four commissions of inspection, charged with the duty of an immediate flying survey of the farms that were to be allotted the burghers after the drawing of lots.

This difficult and dangerous work began at once. For years the country continued to resound with the warlike exploits of the natives. In May 1887 Botha reported. The time occupied had been long, for, owing to climatic reasons, it was possible to work only in winter. Moreover, in view of the unexpectedly large number of men who were entitled to a grant, it was decided—when the work was about half finished—to reduce the size of allotments. This

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meant that the whole job had to be tackled afresh. The result of Botha's survey was a thick book, now reposing in the Union's archives at Pretoria. A clear description, detailed and with proper diagram, is supplied of some 250 farms. Botha's zeal and reliability had already been appreciated at the start of the Zululand adventure, as appears from the request to him, made by the Executive in September 1884, immediately to proceed with the inspection of the land on which the township of Vryheid was to be laid out. Shortly afterward the Government established its capital there.

In 1887 Botha occupied Waterval No. 130, a farm he had obtained in exchange for another which had fallen to him by lot. His estate was one of about 3500 acres, situated in Ward II, not far from the township of Vryheid. In the course of years, an extensive, up-to-date homestead arose from the one-time wilderness.

In 1886 Botha had married Annie, the eldest daughter of John Cheere Emmett, a Swellendam man who had settled at Harrismith, Orange Free State, and who was descended from a brother of the famous Irish patriot. Miss Annie Emmett had a sturdy brother, who had taken part in the Zululand expedition and struck up a lasting friendship with Botha. In that way the latter came to return to the Free State one day and meet his future wife, a very talented girl. She was a good musician and, *rara avis* among women, blessed with a sense of humour. Her people favoured the advances of a swain who did not appeal to her; on the other hand, they wondered what she could possibly see in that "little Dutch boy" (Botha was a six-footer). So, to be free from annoyance, she accepted a situation as a teacher at a sufficient distance to protect her from unwelcome attentions.

Early in their married life, Botha and his wife, like most other young couples, experienced financial stringency. The primitive nature of society around them was oppressive. Thanks, however, to the strong sense of duty and infinite energy on the husband's part, as well as to the wife's grace,

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tact, and devotion, their married life brought them uninterrupted happiness. They had three sons and two daughters. Botha's serious views on marriage and family life were in accord with the national tradition. During the whole of his life he never swerved from them. The warm affection between the spouses remained unchanged; she was a thoroughly modest woman, he was an equally decent man. Early in 1917 Mrs Botha's health left much to be desired; in the course of a letter to a friend the anxious husband twice mentioned a turn for the better, adding: "Thank God, she is a great deal stronger. My cross had become almost too much to bear. I was getting so nervous as to be sometimes on the verge of a breakdown, but now I can see light again."

A few years of material cares were followed by a period of prosperity. Botha knew how to make farming pay, the more so because he was a practical business-man, not averse from a little flutter at times. Energetically he worked his farm, which was suitable for mixed husbandry; and in October 1899 it included a comfortable dwelling-house, built of freestone; further, a neat outhouse, used as an office, a roomy store, stabling for horses, cows and pigs, and large enclosures, all made of stone. His cattle was always of particularly good quality. When the Boer war broke out he had about 4000 sheep and a dozen imported rams (wool sold at 4d. to 5d. in those days!), approximately 600 head of cattle, mostly milch-cows, a hundred fine mares, and among his first-class stallions a costly thoroughbred Oldenburg cart-horse, which was the envy of the neighbourhood. Then there were a good-looking lot of foals and a number of riding-horses, carriages, and waggons—in fact, everything that the heart of a well-to-do yeoman, used to a spacious life, could desire.

Despite initial financial struggles Botha, like most landed proprietors, yielded to the temptation to increase his holding by the purchase of neighbouring farms. In 1894 he was elected field-cornet of Ward II, which meant a salary of a couple of hundred a year. As native commissioner he had

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to collect hut tax; and as his ward contained the bulk of the Vryheid native population, he drew another couple of hundred in this way. Three years later he bought part of Uitzicht, next to Waterval. In 1898 he added a portion of Kalbasfontein and the whole of the farm Yorkshire.

The same year saw him elected to the Volksraad. Hard work, coupled with marvellous intuition as a farmer, had made him financially independent, the owner of more than 16,000 acres. To the properties mentioned he added part of Zeekoevlei, in the bushveld; the farm Wilhelmhome; in 1895 the southern portion of Varkenspruit, in the district of Standerton (Transvaal). This he bought at about 6s. 6d. an acre; when he went to live there after the Boer war he called it 'Rusthof' (Home of Rest). It was the summer farm for his small stock.

Not all his funds were derived from farming. In 1891 he purchased from the estate of a deceased brother-in-law about 1800 acres containing coal measures. The value of this ground went up in consequence, and during his premiership of the Transvaal he sold it to a company for £9000. In partnership with L. Meyer, who was an equally shrewd man of affairs, and knew all there was to be known about the district, Botha entered into a contract with the Government for the construction of a railway line from Vryheid to Buffalo River. This they made over to an engineering firm; each netted about £5000. In those days nobody took offence when a Volksraad member publicly contracted with his Government. Meyer and Botha, between them, managed a land syndicate, which yielded its thousand pounds from time to time.

In 1895 the Transvaal Government prevailed on Botha to go and look after its interests in Swaziland. On April 25 the Executive formally decided to appoint four R.J.P.'s, who were to be at the same time sub-native commissioners. They were under the Special Commissioner at Bremersdorp. On May 18 Botha was appointed to reside at Mbabane; there he stayed until the middle of November when he returned to Vryheid and resumed his field-cornetcy.

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In our day, Mbabane is on the Transvaal-Delagoa motor road. Toward the end of last century it was a very small place indeed, almost without means of approach. The R.J.P. and his young wife were among the few presentable inhabitants. The white population of the territory, small though it was, could by no means be said to be of uniformly high quality. Many an unpleasant quarter of an hour was caused the Transvaal official and his wife. Their short stay in Swaziland did not leave any delectable impressions. There was for instance a wholesale illicit liquor traffic with the natives; Botha was the first man to succeed in putting it down. The Swazis thought a great deal of him, as was shown by their queen-mother always referring to him as a "good white man."

Shortly after his return to Vryheid one of those upheavals, so frequent in South African history, occurred. The Johannesburg 'Reformers' went into revolt, simultaneously with the Jameson Raid. The country was in a hubbub—part of it under arms. The burghers of Botha's ward, although far removed from the centre of unrest, at once consulted their field-cornet. As such, he wired to President Kruger:

"My burghers and I fully approve Government's action towards Johannesburg revolt. We offer assistance, and are ready to start at any moment. We are indignant at Johannesburg's actions, and hope that all rebels will be punished and made example of. We trust the Government, and stand by it, come what may. Burghers were never more unanimous than now, and stand by Government like one man."

Early in 1897, Botha became a candidate for one of the two Volksraad seats apportioned to his district. He was well off at the time. The value of his farms, plantations, and other assets may be put at £30,000. Had he wished to do so, he could easily have entered politics at an earlier date, but he always felt that a public man should be free from private and financial worries. He was not moved by any strong desire to further any original policy or economic

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programme; much less did he come forward owing to any vanity or caprice. Nevertheless, he was fully convinced of the fact that he would be able to serve his people better than many another politician. He proved so popular that he polled more votes than his senior colleague for the double constituency, the veteran L. Meyer, who had helped to build up the district above, and who represented the other part of Vryheid.

In those days everybody knew everybody else over large distances. Throughout Natal, in the eastern Free State and in the southern Transvaal, Louis Botha was sure of a welcome as a successful farmer, a good fellow, a real sport, and a popular character whose word was to be trusted. His notable victory at the poll was the outcome of appreciation and respect felt for his personality—not the triumph of any platform cry. While the Vryheid electors, by their strong support of Botha's candidature, demonstrated the correctness of their democratic views, they never became passionately attached to any one of the political groups that were turning out their respective shibboleths at Pretoria and Johannesburg. The honourable members for Vryheid were expected to look after local interests as well as to take into account the intelligent and independent patriotism of their constituents; as long as this was done, Vryheid was content.

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III

BOTHA IN THE VOLKSRAAD

THE first Volksraad of the South African Republic consisted of barely thirty members—quite enough, considering the small number of voters. The Government was constituted, partly by plebiscite, partly by appointments made by the Volksraad. There was therefore no question of party government by a parliamentary majority. 'Opposition' to the Administration amounted to criticism—neither more nor less. On occasion, the Volksraad itself assumed executive functions. There was no grouping of disciplined parties. A vague division existed, it is true, between those who (influenced by President Kruger) looked to the arbitrament of force as the sole means of defence against the constant menace provided by the Uitlander movement and men who trusted to the absorption of non-burghers into the legitimate political sphere of power vesting in the old population, in the expectation that this would increase the strength of the resistance to the aggression of oversea financial interests. In consequence of this dividing-line there arose later on, both inside the Volksraad and in the country, a war party as opposed to the forces that were making for a *modus vivendi* resting on common South African interests. Though a Transvaaler to the backbone, Botha sympathized with these broader currents.

Volksraad sessions lasted from February until October, sometimes longer. They were of an exceedingly deliberative character, and one heard of complaints to the effect that it was difficult for members to catch the Chairman's eye. When Botha took his seat for the first time, the fathers of the nation occupied themselves for days with the question of compensation to be awarded a widow owing to the loss of some land.

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Repeatedly Botha objected to Volksraad interference in essentially executive issues. On one occasion he advocated an increase of administrative departments, under the control of Executive members, whose number, he said, might very well become greater. During his first session, lasting 160 days, he spoke over fifty times. He seconded a motion to grant Volksraad members an annual salary of £1200 (*i.e.*, proportionately to the time spent by every one on his legislative duties) with the argument that the increase had the full approval of his constituents. The motion was adopted.

The Dynamite Question.—During the same year he showed himself an opponent of the dynamite concession worked by Nobel's Trust as Transvaal manufacturers. In Johannesburg, London, and elsewhere a systematic agitation was maintained against this concern; the Colonial Office at Westminster knew something about this movement. On August 21, 1899, shortly before the Boer War, Botha made a speech in the Volksraad in his capacity as a member of the Select Committee to report on the question. The record of the oration is perhaps the lengthiest to be found in the official Minutes. He completely changed his old views on this important question. The Raad, he said, would make a mistake if it annulled the contract between the Government and the Dynamite Company. There was a clamour for such a course, but he felt convinced that no court of law would grant it, hence cancellation had to be regarded as wrong.

Botha made this somersault, fully aware of the "jeers and insinuations" (as he called them in his speech) that would be thrown at him, and from which he had not enjoyed immunity during a few preceding skirmishes in the House. His success as a farmer and a man of affairs, young and well-to-do as he was, caused envy. His change of attitude on the burning question drew the attention of the late President Steyn among others. Steyn pressed Kruger to cancel the concession, without further ado, in view of the awkward clouds of dust that it raised. Subsequently, Steyn relates:

> During the war I once asked Botha how it was that he too had reported in favour of continuing the concession he had at one time

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opposed so strongly. He told me that, having gone carefully into the whole matter, he saw no other way open to him. The Government had bound the country in connection with this concession as well as with cognate agreements; there was nothing else for it.

Steyn admits that his anticipation of Lord Milner bringing up the refusal to cancel as a *casus belli* proved incorrect. In connexion with Botha's change of opinion a criminal case came before the courts eight years later. Botha was alleged —by way of reward for his attitude—to have received £2000 from the Dynamite Company on the day when the vote was taken. A man who had been convicted once before visited Botha, in company with another, in June 1907 at his office; he attempted to blackmail him for a large amount, threatening to reveal the payment of the £2000, made by himself, so he said. Now, ever since the gold industry began to increase in importance, there was no paucity of schemes having for their object the influencing of the Executive and Volksraad at Pretoria. Thus a class of individual sprang up who claimed that by means of judiciously distributed presents they were able to get the wishes of their credulous and liberal principals carried out. What they did was to stick to the money, while unscrupulously stuffing their principals with imaginary facts. Such a person was the man who tried to blackmail Botha, and who on August 2, 1907, was in consequence sentenced by the Transvaal High Court to three years' hard labour.

Contrary to the custom of the majority of his fellow-members, Botha used to bring his family to Pretoria with him. Even more exceptional was his occasionally accompanying his wife to a dance! Such an innovation in Pretoria's legislative circles was nothing less than offensive. Honourable members were punctilious as to a semi-ecclesiastically formal dress and generally as to a dignified behaviour.

Botha and the War.—Perusal of the voluminous reports of Volksraad debates (1897-9) is bound to lead to the conclusion that Botha distinguished himself by a level-headed, businesslike conception of his duties. The shadows cast before by the approaching war against England were

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remarkably light as far as the Volksraad was concerned. A few secret sessions were held; but until the last moment members with seeming calm devoted the whole of their attention to comparatively futile matters; all the time, excitement in connexion with the approaching catastrophe was increasing throughout the country.

A few weeks before the outbreak of war, Botha quietly took part in a Volksraad debate on native locations, the fencing of farms, and the leasing of Government ground. Yet he had moved, a couple of months previously, a brief adjournment in order to enable members to meet their constituents, and inform them as to the trend of events. When on October 2, 1899, shortly before President Kruger's ultimatum, the Raad thought fit, "in view of the abnormal situation," to adjourn the Session, the member for Vryheid had already left the capital to prepare for military service. It is to be supposed that he did his very best in order to preserve peace; the available documents, however, supply but little evidence on the point. On September 5 and 8, *i.e.*, a little over a month before the declaration of war, a full-dress debate on relations with Great Britain took place. On the second day, Botha said what was in his heart:

> What he wanted was a defensive position—not war. Emphatically he would oppose any steps that might affect the integrity of the country. They should avoid a defiant attitude; at the same time, they should say: thus far, and no further. The Government had already yielded more than Cape Ministers had asked for at the Bloemfontein conference, but this had not satisfied the other side. The British Government was trying to force its subjects on to the Republic, just as if they had been a set of rogues, whom England wanted to get rid of . . . British threats deeply grieved him. (Here the speaker became so excited that the Chairman twice had to call him to order.) The Transvaal had done all it could in order to preserve peace, but he thought they had now gone far enough. Already, it was being said—the Boers are afraid; they are conceding things all along the line. He denied this, however. They had yielded, and had gone very far because they wanted peace, but not on account of any fear. He strongly denied any such thing.

After two days' discussion, it was resolved by acclamation

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to express regret at the concentration of British troops on the Transvaal border, and to repudiate responsibility for any war that might result.

The tone of Botha's speech had been neither below nor above the general high level of Transvaal patriotism of the day. It was decidedly not that of a convinced pacifist. Three long years of the miseries of war were to cause an entire metamorphosis in Botha's patriotism. The member for Vryheid, who in 1899 was afraid of the other section doubting his courage, was not to lead his people through many vicissitudes in vain. In the end he gained the right to point out to South Africa, after the Peace of Vereeniging, a new path leading to a greater future than even he had ever dreamt of.

As a legislator Botha did not particularly influence the course of South African affairs in pre-Boer war days. Nevertheless, his Raad membership undoubtedly affected South African history deeply—it made him a 100 per cent. Transvaaler. Born in Natal a British subject, he first became a Free Stater and then a burgher of the New Republic. He adopted his fourth nationality when the little State in question was absorbed into the South African Republic. Botha's active participation in the Volksraad's work definitely assimilated him with the Transvaal Boers, also in the eyes of outsiders. The staunchness and stamina, the military virtues generally, of the Vryheid (New Republic) burghers made their commando one of the nuclei of the Boer army during the great period of national struggle.

When finally, in May 1902, lasting peace between Briton and Boer was proclaimed, Botha no longer was a 100 per cent. Transvaaler: the Second War of Independence had made him into a 100 per cent. South African.

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IV

BOTHA AT COLENSO—AND AFTER

THE Vryheid commando under General Lucas Meyer, to which Botha belonged, was in the nature of things destined to take part in the Natal offensive which had for its object keeping the English forces near the Republic's south-eastern border in check. Botha, in his capacity as principal A.D.C. to the commanding officer, was present at the battle of Dundee, and on October 30 at the fighting near Ladysmith. There he took General Meyer's place, and was himself promoted to be a general, Meyer having been put out of action for a while by severe illness. The Ladysmith garrison was, before long, invested by the Free State and Transvaal commandos, and Botha soon showed himself an active soldier with a long view, in contrast with several of his slow-going, heavy-thinking, fellow-officers. His initiative led to welcome activity in the Boer laagers round Ladysmith.

He also induced General Piet Joubert, the commander-in-chief, to order a *reconnaissance-en-force*, which was pushed nearly as far as Maritzburg, the capital of Natal, practically under Botha's leadership. The remarkable success of this bold move forced the British command to change its plans and divert part of the reinforcements, which were then landing, to Natal. The reconnaissance showed the Boers that the 'Garden Colony' was practically defenceless. At a council of war, held in connexion with this result, Botha was all in favour of occupying the whole of Natal. Joubert refused to sanction the enterprise. Perhaps he did not see his way clear to effect the civil administration of such a slice of conquered territory, or to keep the harbour of Durban—far removed from the Boers' chief base—in a

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state of permanent defence. In any case, he preferred to maintain the siege of Ladysmith in order that the gateway to the Free State and the Transvaal might be kept intact.

The Tugela Line.—Botha, for his part, insisted on the strategic importance of holding on to the northern Tugela bank. This would deprive the British Army of any advantage derived from the presence of the river, reducing it to the necessity of preparing for the attack at a spot a good deal farther south. And thus it was decided. Botha was obviously the man to undertake the vital defence, advocated so strenuously by himself; he was to hold the line of the Tugela against an army corps under Sir Redvers Buller which had been landed at Durban for the relief of Ladysmith.

Until the end of February 1900 Botha withstood continuous and tremendous pressure on his position; but, although his strength of mind—combined with military genius—had become literally indispensable, he was never formally given the supreme command of the Tugela defenders. Only later did the Boers realize the necessity of co-ordinating great military operations by entrusting the direction to one hand. The famous brain-wave of the French Directoire which appointed Napoleon, then a man of but twenty-seven, generalissimo of the French troops in Italy, would have been inconceivable with a nation like the Boers who were accustomed, in time of peace, to determine the choice of a Commandant-general and other officers by the method of popular election!

Suddenly the railway hamlet of Colenso, where a bridge spans the Tugela, became world-famous, when Buller, on December 15, 1899, attempted to hack his way to Ladysmith through the Boer lines. The extremely efficient manner in which the attempt was foiled by Botha suddenly caused his name to be entered on the list of great commanders. His military genius showed itself in his knack of fathoming the strategic significance of movements; in his extraordinarily correct and quick grasp of how the land lay; in his sound knowledge of the effect of artillery and rifle fire respectively. Aeroplanes, tanks, and other modern arma-

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ments were not invented until after the Boer War. With uncanny facility he was able to divine his enemy's thoughts. He knew how to "see what went on behind the rise." He was not only a splendid tactician, but also a great strategist. And yet he had never studied military science, or had anything to do with soldiering.

Experts testify that the defence of the Tugela lines could not possibly have been arranged more scientifically. The scheme for a possible overwhelming of Buller's army was perfectly conceived, even though it was not carried out in its entirety. Botha's idea was to keep the exact position of the Boer trenches, and the presence of defending forces, a complete secret; the British artillery fire was to be left unanswered, and the enemy led to think that the most convenient route to Ladysmith could be forced by a frontal attack north of Colenso. If his scheme succeeded, as it did, the British troops were to be allowed to cross the bridge without let or hindrance. It was only after the enemy's arrival on the northern bank that the Boers were to open fire. The Boer trenches quite dominated the ground, and, since the Transvaal guns easily covered the bridge, a retreat across it was virtually unthinkable. The British would have been caught in a trap, and Buller's only way out would have been surrender.

The Battle of Colenso.—Botha's express orders not to fire until he had given the signal was, however, ignored. A battery of English guns, unduly advanced, came within range of a squad of Boers, who could not resist the temptation to pull the trigger. The bravery displayed by the British in trying to save the guns—only two were got out—is one of the most famous episodes in the day's work. The incident totally changed the complexion of the fighting; the crossing of the Tugela, foreseen by Botha and actually ordered by Buller, did not materialize. The Boers had reason to be satisfied; but the result remained far below Botha's anticipation. The people were grateful, because they had discovered in Botha the strategist and the fighter who had been so anxiously sought. Technically as well as

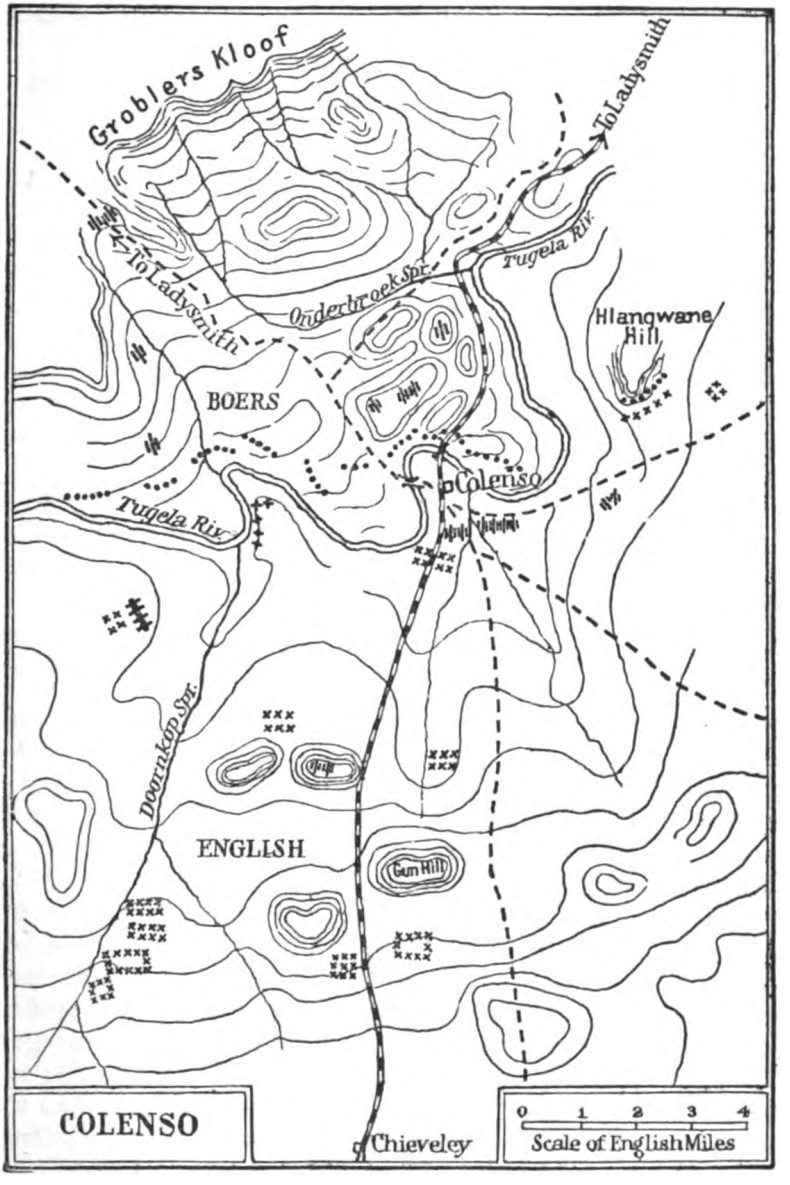
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by his strength of will and the ease with which he both inspired confidence and enforced obedience, he was more than a match for most of his colleagues.

I remember an incident belonging to the Colenso period that deserves to be recorded. The Boer positions had been bombarded continuously for two days by heavy naval guns. One requires to have gone through such an experience in order to realize how demoralizing it all proves to irregulars: day after day, with but short intervals, the interminable bursting—in unexpected places—of heavy lyddite shells, until the very earth rocks! Botha had to draw on the last bit of his personal magnetism, if the burghers were to maintain their self-control. Without rest he rode along the lines, inspiring his men with the courage to stand firm, and inspecting trenches. He began to feel the strain of keeping his forces in the positions allotted to them. All at once the important post at Hlangwane, south of the Tugela, on the Boer left flank, was abandoned. The most peremptory orders were required in order to get the Wakkerstroom commando to reoccupy it. In such ways the commander-in-chief had, without intermission, to look after the *moral* of his subordinates! On one of those abominable days I was told to convey a verbal message to him from Commandant Joachim Ferreira, whose strong laager was, without molestation, guarding the road to Helpmekaar, east of the lines. He offered part of his contingent for the reinforcement of the Colenso positions.

After a long, roundabout ride I found Botha. He was holding a council of war under a tree. Slowly, impressively, he was addressing his silent, almost sullen, officers. Several of them were older men and had been, until a few weeks previously, senior to him in rank. My message having been delivered, Botha spoke with powerful voice, full of conviction: "I shall let Commandant Ferreira know that I do not require reinforcements; as long as everyone does his duty, we shall beat off the enemy." Determination, not bulk, was to prevail. Whereas Buller disposed of 15,000 men, with abundance of artillery, Botha had to defend

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his miles and miles of front with less than 5000 men and half a dozen guns.

The telegraphic despatch sent by Botha to Pretoria read:

> To-day the God of our fathers has given us a great victory. On all sides we repulsed the enemy. We allowed twelve guns, under heavy bombardment, to be advanced to just near the river. As soon as these had been unlimbered, we fired our Mausers, killing the gunners and disorganizing them to such an extent that they could not recover more than two of the guns. The other ten fine, big cannon we took, together with thirteen full ammunition-waggons. About 150 of their best men, who bravely stormed time and again, were taken prisoners, several officers among them. The enemy's losses must have been terrific. Bodies are covering the veld, and I think there must be 2000 killed. We have about thirty killed and wounded. I shall send further particulars later. With a thankful heart I can congratulate you and the Afrikander people on this brilliant victory.

The British losses afterward turned out to be a little over 1100. Botha, after taxing the enemy with abuse of the Red Cross, concluded his despatch:

> Humbly I request Government to proclaim a universal day of prayer in order to thank Him who made us triumph.

Spionkop.—Successfully Botha kept guard along the Tugela, beating off repeated attacks by Buller. The best-known of these culminated at Spionkop, west of the Colenso positions. On January 17, 1900, the fight for the hill began (a week after Lord Roberts' arrival at Capetown). It lasted until the 24th. English casualties amounted to 1733, of whom 44 officers and 655 men were killed or missing. Botha's victory was made possible by the correct use of barely half a dozen guns, excellently served, and the assistance of a small number of stalwart burghers. The English kept up the eight days' assault with exemplary courage. On the last evening of the stubborn fight the Transvaal generalissimo was quite exhausted. An officer who had to deliver a despatch found him in the tent of his magnificent commander of artillery, Major Wolmarans. Botha was busy, dictating an account of the operations, when fatigue

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got the better of him. General, major, and secretary, all three, fell into a deep slumber. Their heads leaning on the table, they were discovered by the officer, entirely done up after the prolonged severe tension.

At the end of January, Botha visited Pretoria, but General Joubert soon recalled him. He was just in time to resume command on February 6, when Vaalkrantz, east of Spionkop, had to be defended against a fresh attempt to break through to Ladysmith; this failed like its predecessors.

Elsewhere, matters began to look black for the Boers. Kimberley was relieved on February 15, 1900. Lord Roberts sent a strong cavalry detachment into the Free State, and on February 27 Cronje surrendered to the British commander-in-chief.

These reverses caused a panic among Free Staters as well as Transvaalers. The fact that their country had been invaded made almost every one give up courage, and set up an intense longing for home. The commandos, never susceptible to discipline, were possessed by apathy. The desire for leave, which had given a great deal of trouble from the very beginning, became irresistible. De Wet even disbanded for the time being the whole of his command, while the British were resting on their laurels.

In Natal Botha had to keep up a running fight, yielding one position after another, so that Ladysmith was relieved on February 28, after an admirable defence. On February 17 things had begun to go wrong for the Boers when General Lyttelton forced their positions at Monte Christo, on the eastern wing of the Tugela line. This was the beginning of a general retreat. The demoralized burghers had fought for ten days, suffering a heavy bombardment, while Buller, who continually received reinforcements, pushed the attack. The late General Viljoen says in his book, *Omzwerving*:

> If Botha had not, driven by a sense of duty, seen to it that a rear-guard was formed, thus covering our retreat, the English would have taken an appalling number of our laagers; a great many burghers, mounted on exhausted horses, would have been made prisoners.

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Owing, however, to Buller remaining inactive for some time, Botha was able to manage the safe withdrawal of his forces from Natal. Had the British pushed home their success north of Ladysmith, surprising the Boers during their retreat by sharp attacks, the war would probably have come to an end during the first half of 1900—so Botha himself admitted afterward.

In reply to a direct question at a council-of-war held at Glencoe toward the middle of February, Joubert indicated Botha as his deputy in the high command. Early in March, the last named was formally appointed Assistant-Commandant-General—not a day too soon. During the middle of the same month, while Lord Roberts was occupying Bloemfontein, Botha was superintending the Boer retreat at Waschbank, Northern Natal, where he had the coal-mines along the railway line put out of action. When Natal was evacuated by his men, he had to choose positions defending the south-eastern Transvaal. He occupied a strong front at Langsnek, at the foot of Majuba, where his younger brother Christiaan was left in command.

General 'Chris' Botha had recently been appointed Assistant-Commandant-General. He had fought against Buller; during the second phase of the war he took part in operations at Belfast, Vryheid, and Itala. The Langsnek positions were so formidable that Buller, on his northward march, refused to make a frontal attack. He reached Volksrust *via* Allemansnek and the Free State, thus compelling the Transvaalers to abandon Langsnek. Lord Dundonald relates that on May 30 Buller sent the Boer commander a message to the effect that, since the latter's communications had been cut, it would be of no use to continue his resistance. An armistice was agreed to, up to June 5, on which date Botha wrote declining Sir Redvers Buller's terms of surrender.

Unconditional surrender had been asked for. Chris Botha replied stating that all he could consider was a peace proposal. Shortly after the Vereeniging Conference, where he had represented the Swaziland commando, he suc-

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cumbed to an operation, rendered necessary by the hardships he had suffered during the War. An older brother, Philip, was one of General de Wet's most active lieutenants. Early in 1901 his seventy burghers held off a British column, over five hundred strong, moving from Winburg toward Ventersburg. The morning after this successful defence, Philip Botha was wounded in the forehead. That evening he was dead. At about the same time two sons of his, Hermanus and Charlie, were wounded in an encounter near Vrede. Another brother of Louis Botha's, Gert, captained a scout corps until the end of hostilities.

Botha becomes Commandant-General. — On March 27 General Piet Joubert died at Pretoria. No one could have competed with the victor of Colenso for the honour of taking over the burden of commanding the dishevelled Transvaal forces. Early in May 1900 President Kruger made the usual speech at the opening of the annual Volksraad session. One of the paragraphs ran as follows:

> I have appointed Louis Botha Commandant-General—provisionally, and until such time as an election can be held. It was the late General Joubert's wish that Mr Botha should assume this important position after him. I feel convinced that this provisional appointment has the nation's full approval.

The Transvaal Constitution provided that both the State President and the Commandant-General had to be elected by the people. Botha, however, never attained to the position of a duly elected, full-fledged commander-in-chief! His appointment remained provisional, and at first he was called Acting Commandant-General. All the same, it did not take him long to put his house in order. He pushed younger men into prominent positions, and cashiered incapable officers. Discipline was tightened up, transport and commissariat were systematically attended to. When he assumed chief responsibility there was hardly such a thing as an army left. Demoralization, dejection, was rife. The disaster of Cronje's surrender sapped the confidence of the Boers, temporarily destroying their efficiency as a fighting force. The same catastrophe,

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however, galvanized—once the first effects of the shock had passed off—the people into a keener realization of the threatening danger. This enabled Botha to get together a new Transvaal force within a few months.

On May 3 Lord Roberts set out from Bloemfontein at the head of over 40,000 men. General Ian Hamilton supported his right with infantry brigades and mounted troops. Generals Lord Methuen and Hunter, each with 10,000 men, entered the Western Transvaal. General Buller, in June, moved 45,000 men from Natal, in a northerly direction, across the High Veld. Reinforcements to the tune of 30,000 monthly were landing in South Africa. On May 7, Botha with 3000 burghers appeared at Virginia Siding, south of Kroonstad, Free State. Previously he had been in laager at Rhenoster River, approximately six miles from the place where General de Wet was then staying at his farm. The two met in Botha's tent. Mr Louis Esselen, who was present, describes the interview as follows:

"De Wet introduced the subject. 'My command,' he said, 'consists of eight men—and one heliograph operator!'

"Botha's advice was: 'Just give way for the time being. Get your men together again. Then break up the British lines of communication. Later on, I shall send you a good man at the head of a commando to help you.'"

A few days later, Botha had a meeting, anything but pleasant, with the Free State leaders, at which he repeated the advice given to de Wet. Within less than a month, the position was somewhat reversed—Botha being cheered by optimistic despatches from de Wet, after the enemy had started overrunning the Transvaal from various directions, causing the utmost panic among its burghers.

Kroonstad had fallen into the hands of the British; Free Staters, not unnaturally, refused to leave their country at the enemy's mercy. It was then agreed that Free Staters and Transvaalers should defend their respective territory, each government continuing the war on its own

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account. As a matter of fact, there had never been any joint supreme command, any more than a co-ordinated scheme of strategy. During the Ladysmith–Colenso period there was but little question of effective co-operation. In February 1900 President Steyn had made an effort to organize the defence of the Tugela line under one head, viz., Prinsloo, the Free State general. This, however, came to nothing. Lord Kitchener wrote to Lord Salisbury: "The Free Staters seem to have little heart in the war, and there is certainly a good deal of feeling between the Transvaalers and them."

Commandos now operated independently; there was no longer any systematic *liaison* between the chiefs. Transvaal and Free State leaders did not meet, except when it became necessary to discuss whether they should cease fighting. It was taken as a matter of course that neither ally should give in without a joint decision to that effect. General Smuts' raid into Cape Colony during the second half of 1901 took place, by way of exception, under formal instructions given by both Republican Governments. The characteristic tendency to diverge increased rather than decreased according as the Boer position became more desperate. When, in May 1902, delegates from both armies met at Vereeniging, relations between the two allies were, if anything, a shade less cordial than they had been at the outbreak of war. "Your war—not ours!" was the leading thought that best interprets the mentality of the Free Staters; their determination to fight till the bitter end becomes all the more interesting in view of this fact.

The Occupation of Pretoria.—Consequent upon the meeting between Botha and the Free State Chief Commandant, General Christiaan de Wet, the latter made it his business to harass the British line of communications with Cape Colony to the best of his ability. Gratefully he accepted Botha's offer of the temporary loan of Danie Theron's valiant Scouts. On May 24 Lord Roberts annexed the Free State by proclamation, what time Botha was awaiting him north of the Vaal. In vain, however,

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did Botha attempt to keep an army together. Three days later the Field-Marshal slept in the same dwelling that had accommodated the Boer general and his staff twenty-four hours previously. In conversation with Ben Viljoen, Botha deplored the rout of his burghers, which had dissipated their fighting spirit. He concluded: "Never mind. Let's keep up our courage, and do our duty!"

On May 28 and 29 there was some sharp fighting for the possession of the Witwatersrand. Botha took a decided stand against those who were planning the destruction of the gold mines as a means of harming the enemy. On May 23 the Commandant-General peremptorily charged Dr F. E. T. Krause, Special Commandant of the Witwatersrand, with the responsibility for the safety of persons and property, including the mines. Dr Krause carefully acquitted himself of this task.

When the British advanced on Pretoria (General Viljoen records) matters appeared so hopeless that Botha, "as best he could, got up a rearguard, so that at least organized resistance was not to collapse altogether." In accordance with a formal resolution by the Grand Council-of-War, Pretoria was evacuated. This resolution harmonized with the view of the Transvaal Government that the capital was not defensible and that all military measures should be abandoned in order to remove cause for bombardment. Late in the evening of June 4 Botha sent an orderly to Lord Roberts with a letter requesting an armistice so that terms for the capitulation of the capital city might be discussed. The intention was to get away rolling-stock and prisoners-of-war. Lord Roberts replied to the effect that surrender must be unconditional: his troops would make their entry early the next morning. Botha then notified that he would refrain from any defence—his object being to ward off a bombardment—and that he left women, children, and property in Lord Roberts' charge.

Diamond Hill.—The occupation of the Rand and Pretoria gave the Transvaal commander time for reassembling a force; with a remarkable measure of success he utilized it.

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GENERALS BOTHA AND DE WET

In May 1900, not long after the occupation of Bloemfontein by Lord Roberts, Botha and De Wet met near Kroonstad. Botha stands on the left, and De Wet on the right of the central figure. The tall man beside De Wet is General P. Botha—brother to Louis—who was killed during the war.

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On June 11 his 6000 burghers put up such a stubborn defence at Donkerhoek (Diamond Hill) that both sides claimed a victory. The British were under Lord Roberts. Fighting had taken place over a front of thirty miles. Once again Botha showed himself a master in preparing and leading a great battle. Time after time the British concentrated at one particular point, intending to break through there. As often, however, they were stopped by the men Botha had ready for them. He was at home all over the vast field of battle; it seemed as if he knew beforehand what movements the enemy was going to make.

The Transvaalers soon recovered. Their enthusiasm, paralyzed for the time being, returned. Meanwhile, General de Wet began to gather fame as a guerilla chief in the Free State. Lord Roberts had thought to "suppress him summarily." All hopes of an early end to the war evaporated among the British, however, as Boer exploits increased in vigour. Nevertheless, the Pretoria-Delagoa railway line gradually fell into the hands of the invaders. Toward the end of July, Republican headquarters were shifted from Donkerhoek, via Bronkhorstspruit, to Balmoral and finally to Nelspruit. Frequently Botha superintended the fighting in person against the advance of British cavalry in order to ensure that cattle and horses at any rate should be sent away in time from the districts he had to give up.

The last great "position fight" of the war took place at Dalmanutha, near the eastern rim of the High Veld. Four thousand Transvaalers were trying to hold a front of thirty-five miles against an assault by at least ten times their number. The British, led by Lord Roberts and Sir Redvers Buller, had abundance of guns. For six days the Boers held on, so as to enable a great concourse (which had gathered behind their fighting-line) to look for safety in the Low Veld. This object was gained, but the commandos were obliged to continue retreating along the railway line, and Komati Poort, the terminus, was occupied at the end of September.

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A month earlier, Botha had, as supreme War Lord, attended a meeting of his Government at Nelspruit which led to President Kruger taking refuge in Portuguese territory. It was considered desirable to let the aged head of the State retire to Europe, rather than allow him to fall into the hands of the enemy, which, sooner or later, appeared inevitable.

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V

BOTHA'S 'SECOND WAR'

Soon after September 1900 Botha once more had military matters shipshape. The railways, it is true, were in the enemy's possession. Contact with the world outside had practically ceased, especially since British influence became paramount in Lourenço Marques.

From Pilgrimsrest the Commandant-General withdrew, fighting, in the direction of Sabie Spitskop, being pressed by Buller's troops. At Hectorspruit he fell ill of malaria. Without delay he and his fellow-members of the Government gave the Low Veld a wide berth. He passed Buller beyond the foot of the Mauchsberg range, and safely reached Nylstroom. It was there that he presided at the council of war attended, among others, by President Steyn, who had specially made his way from the Free State for a last consultation with President Kruger. It was resolved that a few commandos were to operate as closely as possible to Pretoria and the Witwatersrand, in order to keep things on the move in that neighbourhood. Botha, meantime, was to fight over the vast plains of the High Veld. The Free Staters would attempt a raid on Cape Colony.

Lord Kitchener Commander-in-Chief.—This new phase was marked by a change in the British supreme command. On November 15, 1900, Lord Roberts reported to the Secretary for War that organized resistance had ceased in both Republics after Komati Poort had been occupied, and that General Botha's army had been smashed. As much as a month earlier Lord Milner had arrived at Pretoria, expecting to be able to establish a civil administration shortly. Lord Roberts was bound to leave soon, for the

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post of Commander-in-Chief in England had become vacant. The British Government was anxious to see the conqueror of the Boer States at hand for the filling of the vacancy. Military circles at Pretoria were convinced that Lord Kitchener, too, would soon leave, and that General Lyttelton would command South African garrisons, under Lord Milner as Governor. At the end of November, Lord Roberts left, Lord Kitchener taking his place. During the former's journey to Durban he stated that the war was practically over: only "a few marauding bands" remained in the field! London requested his successor to finish the work as quickly, and cheaply, as possible. The British army consisted of 250,000 soldiers, whereas no more than 8000 Boers (so it was said) remained obdurate. These were the figures supplied by Mr St John Brodrick, the new War Secretary. In the Metropolis people had become tired of the picnic!

"*Another War.*"—A remarkable period had begun. Both in the Free State and in the Transvaal the Boers began to fight with an energy hitherto unknown. Long ago they had had to relinquish or destroy their heavy ordnance. Those burghers who had given up courage were unhesitatingly sent home for a rest. Those who remained in the field were fired by fresh enthusiasm for the justice of their cause. Gradually their number increased. Strong discipline was applied; sharp methods of fighting were resorted to. Botha managed to get his commandants appointed by himself, instead of their being elected by the burghers. Lord Kitchener's biographer states:

> Botha, with a fine contempt for formulae, deliberately inaugurated operations which were regularly adapted to their arena and organization. The Boers started another war.

In October the commandant of Bethal was ordered by the Commandant-General to notify that burghers would be prevented from laying down arms. Disobedience rendered them liable to have all their goods confiscated; even their homesteads might perhaps not be spared. Railway lines were to be destroyed, and trains seized, so that food might

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become available. Early in December Botha circularized magistrates and officers, enclosing instructions for the punishment of burghers who refused to join a commando. During the same month, Lord Kitchener estimated the Boer strength at 20,000, noting that they acted boldly whenever a chance presented itself. Throughout the country there was a considerable military revival. Lord Kitchener could see no hope of peace, and asked for reinforcements. Trains were attacked so bravely and successfully that he had to defend and protect railways as well as main roads by a system of blockhouses at an average distance of four hundred yards. Garrisons no sooner evacuated a township than the Republican flag was hoisted, and a landdrost appointed. During the same period Pretoria issued a proclamation expressly offering protection to every Boer who 'handsupped.' This, however, was of no avail; Lord Kitchener's pessimistic despatch was dated less than four weeks after Lord Roberts' boast of complete victory!

Boer strategy in those days was especially directed toward the reduction of pressure in the Transvaal by shifting the main theatre of operations to the Cape, where a large number of farmers were ready to take up arms. General Beyers was ordered to move far southward. In case this led to the evacuation by the British of the Western Transvaal, General de la Rey was expected to join General Smuts' invasion of Cape Colony, so as either to effect a junction with Beyers or work independently.

In December 1900 General de Wet vainly tried to move a Free State detachment southward at Aliwal North. In February 1901 he again attempted to enter the Colony. Botha adhered to his scheme of pushing through to the Eastern Province *via* Natal and Pondoland or East Griqualand. The English forces near the Orange River were hurriedly strengthened; by a supreme effort toward the end of February they pushed back Generals de Wet and Hertzog into the Free State. It was only during the second half of 1901 that General Smuts scored some successes in Cape territory, holding his own against General

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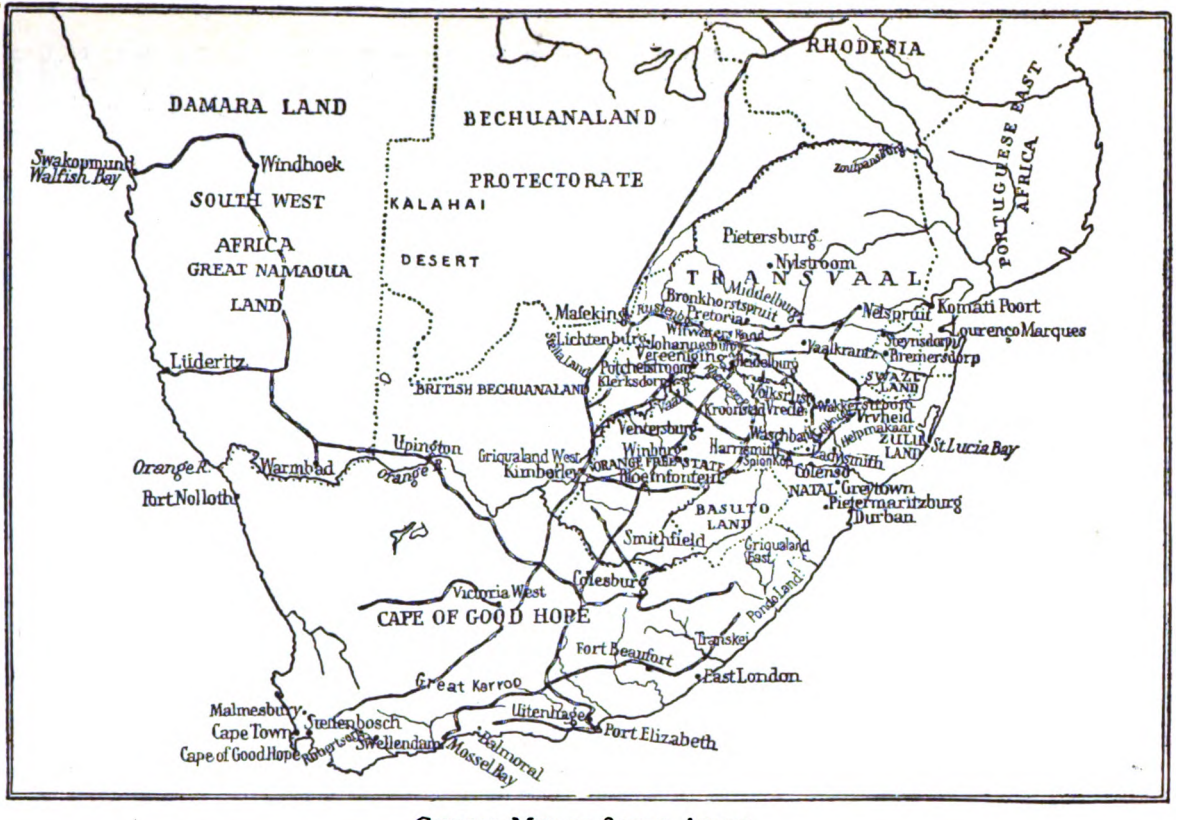
French. Botha, de la Rey, and Beyers were compelled to continue the fight in the Transvaal.

220,000 *against* 20,000.—Before long, the reinforcements asked for by Kitchener began to pour into Capetown; they were supplemented by local corps, and Pretoria now disposed of 80,000 mounted men, 85,000 infantry regulars, 20,000 militia, 13,000 gunners, 4000 engineers, and 11,500 auxiliaries from Australia and elsewhere. This army, a powerful one for South Africa, had 100 heavy guns, 420 field pieces, and sixty pompoms.

Never before had any European power carried on war overseas on such a scale, and six thousand miles away. Every great port, in the New and Old World both, sent its vessels to the South, heavily laden with remounts, barbed wire, munitions, food, mules, building material, medical comforts, fodder *e tutti quanti*. South Africa's own normal economy was virtually paralyzed. The few who were not either on active service or in gaol made a living out of the British military organization, all for the crushing of some 20,000 Boers, who continued to defend their national independence with their lives.

During the second half of February 1901 Lord Kitchener felt strong enough to detach General French, together with six other generals and 60,000 men, in order to carry out a 'great sweep' on the High Veld. Botha was very hard pressed and urged the neighbouring commandos to greater efforts so as to create a diversion. The boulder did not succeed in smashing the fly. Lord Kitchener had intended a demonstration in order to impress Botha with the hopelessness of further resistance, however pluckily maintained. The British Commander-in-Chief really began to long for a cessation of hostilities, realizing that a dearly bought victory could never lead to inspiring results for the conqueror. A soldier of the fine type to which Kitchener belonged could not relish the grind with which he had been charged. So it happened that this time the olive branch was held out by the British.

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General Map of South Africa

See also map at page 65

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VI

BOTHA AND LORD KITCHENER

THE first effort to stop the war was made by both Boer Governments in March 1900. Shortly after the surrender of Cronje, the commandos were recalled from Natal, Cape Colony, and Bechuanaland, so that British territory was entirely free from Boer occupation. Independence was to be maintained as a *sine qua non*. On other subjects both Presidents were prepared to yield a good deal: but the English refused to negotiate. The 'impudence' of the Transvaal ultimatum was held up in justification of this attitude and as a good reason for complete annexation. As if every nation were not entitled to self-preservation! No State can afford to acquiesce in systematic preparations for attack made by another State. Admittedly it had been with aggressive objects that England had poured troops into South Africa and concentrated them close to the Republican borders. Had Pretoria, then, been unreasonable in demanding their removal? England's irreconcilable attitude of those days, provoking as it did Boer fanaticism on the subject of independence, probably contributed to the series of events that culminated in the salutary changes of the last twenty-five years.

"*Irresponsible Messages.*"—Immediately after the occupation of Pretoria, and with the cognisance of Lord Roberts, 'peace offensives' were undertaken by people who (sometimes, no doubt, in perfect good faith) proclaimed that the moment had arrived for the Boers to desist. General Childers states that "De Wet's successes on June 4 and 7 inclined the scale in favour of peace" at English headquarters, whence a promise was made to the Transvaal commander-in-chief to the effect that he would not be sent

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to St Helena in the event of his laying down arms; a few days later Botha and General de la Rey were offered annuities of £10,000 if they surrendered. In the course of the battle of Donkerhoek (June 11, 1900), a couple of Pretorians came to see Botha with British passes. To their representations, Botha (as Ben Viljoen tells us)

> indignantly replied that it was not the first time irresponsible messages about surrender or peace had reached him. Insulting offers had even been made—always in the irresponsible manner of the present ones. He had to express his disappointment at anyone in Lord Roberts's position acting in this way. Lord Roberts might think the country was lost, but he (Botha) would continue to do his duty to the people. He might be shot, gaoled or exiled—his character no one would be able to take away from him.

Further attempts to persuade Botha were made, and in some instances had a tragic sequel.

In the closing months of 1900 the military situation was far less favourable to England than it had been six months earlier. At headquarters someone hit on the idea of finding out, through Mrs Botha, whether the Commandant-General was prepared to meet Lord Kitchener. When Pretoria was occupied, Mrs Botha remained behind with her children in a small house she had rented. President Kruger's wife and the families of several Boer officers also continued to live in the capital. Mrs Botha was informed that, if she wished, she might visit the General and tell him that Lord Kitchener was prepared to see him. The mountain thought fit to go to the prophet!

Mrs Botha's Mission.—Mrs Botha was willing. The Boer Government was somewhere near Bothasberg.

"Lord Kitchener sent a verbal communication to the effect that he was prepared to meet Botha, provided independence was not mentioned," Sir George Arthur tells us in his biography of Kitchener. In General de Wet's book on the war we read: "Botha wrote me saying that Kitchener had asked him for a meeting at Middelburg towards the middle of February, as the British Government wishes to make peace proposals."

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Mrs Botha travelled part of the way by rail, and the remainder by road. The meeting was followed by a few letters in both directions. With the consent of the Boer Government, of which he was a member *ex officio* (and having informed the Free Staters), Botha accepted the invitation to an interview. As Sir George Arthur states, the ever-increasing intrepidity of the burghers had reached a climax in December 1900. Just before the interview (on February 22, 1901, in fact) Kitchener wrote to the Secretary for War (Mr St John Brodrick, afterward Lord Midleton) that High Veld operations—he was thinking of General French's 'great sweep'—had changed the Boers' temper, rendering them more pacific than they had been a few days before. Both generals were careful to take into account the *moral* of their enemy.

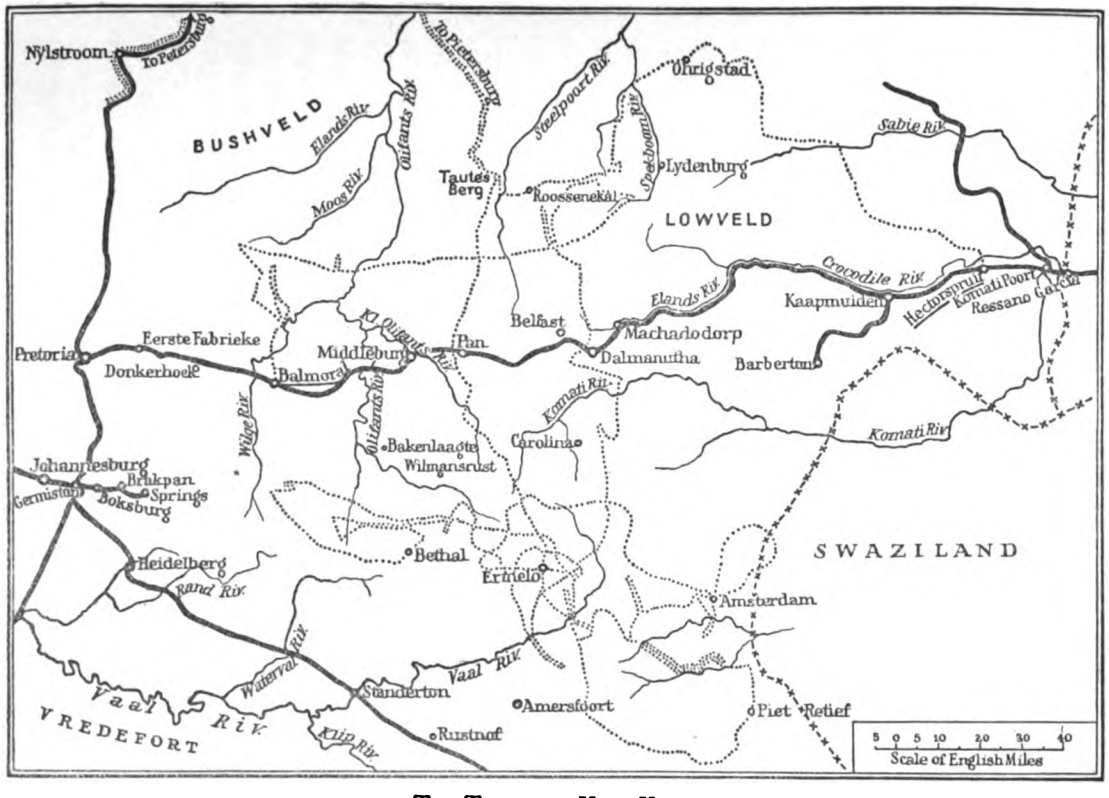
Botha no longer indulged in any vain hopes about the ultimate result. Unlike some of his colleagues, he could not continue to pin his faith either to military fatigue in England or to foreign intervention. His idea was to obtain the best possible terms by inspiring in the British respect for the tenacious Boer resistance. Early in 1901 he was by no means at the end of his tether. Consequently, he was far from being a defeatist. Adv. N. J. de Wet (now Senator de Wet), who was his military secretary until the end came, has given me this assurance. As, however, it was highly important to ascertain exactly what the other side was willing to concede, Botha went to Middelburg.

No complete war book has ever been written from the Transvaal side. Those whom one might have expected to undertake the task did not care to do so, or could not find the time. The Middelburg conversations have to be looked for in British records, although Botha afterward gave some information to his friends.

Kitchener's Insight.—Lord Kitchener wrote to Mr St John Brodrick immediately after the event:

> Botha came in at 10 a.m. and left about 3 p.m. He has a nice, unassuming manner, and seemed desirous of finishing the war, but somewhat doubtful of being able to induce his men to accept peace

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THE TRANSVAAL HIGH VELD

The dotted line from Hectorspruit to Balmoral indicates the peregrinations of the South African Republic Government in the field, as mapped by Captain Paff.

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> without independence in some form or other. He repeated that he and his people felt bitterly losing their independence. . . . He said, incidentally, that he could carry on for some time. He was very bitter about those who had surrendered. Botha is a quiet, capable man, and I have no doubt carries considerable weight with his burghers; he will be, I should think, of valuable assistance to the future Government of the country in an official capacity.

This judgment formed by Kitchener, who was twelve years older than Botha, does honour to both. At Middelburg the foundations were laid for that reciprocal esteem which subsequently was instrumental in promoting the pacification of an agonizing country. The two commanders learned to understand each other, just because they were broad-minded and big-hearted. Botha never made a secret of his admiration for Kitchener. After 1902 they met a few times on official occasions in England.

Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman entertained the Dominion Premiers at dinner during the 1907 Imperial Conference. Nash, his private secretary, tells us:

> He stands chatting with General Botha by the door of the drawing-room at No. 10 (Downing Street). Botha's eyes light up as he catches sight of the most commanding figure in the room, and the two move forward simultaneously with outstretched hands, Kitchener beaming for once.

Sir G. Arthur states that, in October 1910—after unification of South Africa—Botha insisted on Kitchener being consulted on the Union's military affairs, as in all matters of Imperial defence. A few weeks later Kitchener was offered, and accepted, membership of the Imperial Defence Committee.

At Vereeniging.—During the Vereeniging negotiations Kitchener assured Botha that no humiliating feature would attach to the formal surrender of arms by the burghers.

"Leave Lord Milner out of this job," Kitchener said, "you and I will manage it satisfactorily."

Two weeks later, at a farewell dinner in his honour at Pretoria, Kitchener called the Boers a virile race. He felt sure they would be of great benefit to the Empire.

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He praised their wonderful stamina and their military tactics.

Lord Buxton tells us: "At Lord Kitchener's sudden death in 1916, Botha read the cable in the House of Assembly. He added a few words in English, and could scarcely speak . . . a broken whisper." Among Kitchener's late enemies there were others who appreciated him; for instance, General de la Rey's widow sent a telegram of condolence to the Governor-General. This is the lady who in 1902, in the course of her enforced peregrinations in the Western Transvaal, offered a few of her very last fowls to Lord Methuen, then a wounded prisoner-of-war. I was present at the first meeting, after peace, between General de la Rey and Lord Methuen at Roberts Heights, the G.O.C.'s residence near Pretoria. There were no histrionics; it was a cordial affair, as between two old comrades-in-arms. These men had nothing that was petty in them.

At Middelburg.—What did the victors of Omdurman and Colenso tell each other at Middelburg? Although the cardinal question was supposed to be taboo, Botha strongly urged some form of independence. Kitchener was inflexible on this point. There was to be annexation, but he proposed an Executive, with or without an Assembly. The discussion on representation led to the franchise question, particularly as it affected the non-whites. The Boers were traditionally opposed to any native or coloured franchise. The third subject was the fate of the Cape and Natal rebels. Kitchener was accommodating; all he wanted was to disfranchise these men. He had no full power, however, and could only inform London of Botha's views.

In a letter to Lord Roberts, written on the day of the meeting, Kitchener mentions the following points: Botha asked for greater consideration to be shown in connexion with the sending of Boer women to the concentration camps. Kitchener told him that orders had been issued to leave the women on the farms until such time as adequate transport should be available.

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The fact that these orders had been issued showed that Botha did not complain unjustly.

Kitchener says that Botha did not protest against the burning of homesteads. This is not difficult to understand, seeing that the latter had, on his part, recently threatened not to spare the houses of disobedient burghers. Kitchener invited the Boer General and his staff to lunch. The small company—there were only seven in all—was photographed, and shortly afterward adjourned.

Effect in England.—In England the conference attracted a good deal of attention. Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, the Opposition leader, if not an absolute pro-Boer, was at any rate in favour of an understanding. He wanted a settlement in which the Boer claim to be allowed to take part in the government of the country was recognized, and hastened to give his party a lead. At Oxford he made a speech in which he urged "free self-government for the Transvaal and Orange Free State, succeeding a military *régime*, re-establishing peace and order." He opposed any "half-way house" in the nature of Crown Colony administration. On the other side there was a clamant body of public opinion resolutely demanding a ruthless vendetta against the Boers.

On March 7 the British Government's answer was despatched from Pretoria. After the complete pacification of the country, 'representative'—as opposed to 'responsible'—government was to be instituted. The question of the native franchise would only be settled then. If this came about, it would be so restricted as to safeguard the fair preponderance of the whites. Cape coloured persons would, however, obtain the legal rights enjoyed by them in the Cape. As to the amnesty for Cape and Natal rebels, Sir Alfred Milner, the highest civil authority in the country, had opposed it, because it would have a "deplorable effect" in the colonies. Mr Joseph Chamberlain endorsed this view.

Kitchener's Dissent.—Kitchener intensely disliked the reply. He wrote to Brodrick, telling him that the section in South Africa which demanded the ruin of the Boers was

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BOTHA WITH HIS A.D.C.'S ON THE WAY TO KLERKSDORP

The central figure is Botha. On his left are S. Pretorius and H. Watkins; on his right are Helgard de Jager and Niklaas De Wet, his military secretary. The central seated figure is F. Siemssen, telegraphist. On his left is Louis Esselen, and on his right Botha's eldest son, Louis, who was in the field during the second part of the war.

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a small one. Milner he called vindictive. The war was going to drag on indefinitely!

Like all professional soldiers, Kitchener was averse from lengthy operations. He resented the throwing away of a favourable chance of peace; but he cannot escape the charge of having easily bowed to the 'political' argument, put forward by Chamberlain and Milner. As a soldier he should have realized that rebel amnesty was essential if the Boer leaders were honourably to accept terms.

The March despatch was sufficient to make the Boers abandon any further peace efforts. The exact constitution of the ex-Republics might have been made a subject for bargaining and a non-white franchise staved off for some time. The idea of throwing their rebel comrades to Lord Milner, however, was impossible as long as the commandos had any fight left in them. In April members of the Transvaal Government, Botha included, met President Steyn and General de Wet at Vrede, in the Orange Free State. De Wet, in his book, says: "Botha told me the result of the Kitchener negotiations. It was *nil*. . . . We parted, fully determined to fight to the bitter end."

Botha did not send any reply to Pretoria. On May 9 Kitchener wrote to Brodrick to that effect. He told Lord Roberts that he wished he could point to the end being in sight; hence his desire to make terms with Botha. It seemed to him, however, to be a lost hope.

Twelve Fateful Months.—Did Kitchener ever realize the damage to his country's interests caused by his yielding to the civil power? However that may be, he vigorously asserted himself when, fourteen fateful months afterward, fresh *pourparlers* began. He did not again allow Milner to become master of the situation. The net result of the diplomatic interference with the Middelburg opportunity was that, while England pursued a war from motives of national honour, her international prestige and credit suffered. The Boers felt that the hour when they would be able to claim equality with British fellow-South Africans had not yet struck.

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For more than another twelvemonth many precious lives had to be sacrificed; considerable moral and material damage resulted before a proper basis for a permanent understanding was laid down. Botha and Kitchener both did what they could in order to save our country that last pathetic-heroic year. Lord Buxton's book tells us what Botha, several years later, said about the Middelburg incident:

"If others had not intervened," Botha stated, "we might have concluded a peace acceptable to both sides. We were told, however, that the people who had helped us would go to prison. This we could not for a moment contemplate. Negotiations, therefore, had to conclude. We no longer had any food. We were without waggons. We lacked ammunition. Yet we held out for another year. We were forced to smash our Mausers and to go on with rifles and ammunition taken from the British. Great Britain spent millions of money and lives innumerable. In the end we got terms as good as we had asked for at Middelburg."

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VII

BOTHA AS A 'BITTER-ENDER'

THANKS to an uninterrupted flow of reinforcements during the first six months of 1901, the British Army was able to act with progressive violence, leaving desolation wherever it went. Military pressure and the systematic denudation of the country districts were being specially felt by the Boers in the Transvaal, where the goldfields were required to register a monthly output once again, and had to be protected against the commandos. Even non-combatants were severely combed out. Homesteads, orchards, agricultural implements, were practically destroyed wherever they were met with. Cattle and sheep were either driven off or killed. In May 1901 the number of whites 'roped in' was 77,000—of coloured, 21,000. Five months later the aggregate had reached 160,000.

On June 14 Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman—shortly after a talk with Miss Emily Hobhouse, who had returned from South Africa—made his now famous protest against the concentration camps and the complete destruction of the farms:

> "It is said 'war is war.' When is a war not a war? When it is carried on by methods of barbarism."

The Boers began to feel that their situation was a critical one. The only way left to them of continuing the war was to take what they needed—rifles, ammunition, clothes, food—from the enemy. Early in May a council-of-war was held near Ermelo. Among those taking part were Generals Louis Botha, J. C. Smuts, Ben Viljoen, and Chris Botha. It was resolved to ask the British High Command for permission to communicate with the Republican

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representatives in Europe through a messenger. This was refused. Thanks to the good offices of the Netherlands Consul-General at Pretoria, the cable was, however, placed at their disposal.

In reply, Dr Leyds and Abraham Fischer cabled on June 11, stating the opinion of President Kruger, the Deputation, and the Transvaal Plenipotentiary: the decisions taken by the two Boer Governments remained of full force and effect; there was not the slightest prospect of intervention by the Powers; it was impossible to get any more munitions through; in England public opinion continued to veer round in favour of the Boers; measures were being taken to improve the treatment of the women, children, and prisoners-of-war in the camps; whatever might be decided upon, unanimity of the two Republics and equal treatment of Colonial rebels on the same basis as the burghers were urged.

After a meeting of leaders in the field, the following resolution was recorded by the Governments of the South African Republic and Orange Free State, having heard the advice of the principal commanding officers (de Wet, Botha, and de la Rey): "No peace shall be concluded, nor will conditions of peace be accepted, unless our independence and national integrity as well as the interests of our Colonial kinsmen be safeguarded. The war is to be prosecuted vigorously."

Early in June the British had tried to catch the Transvaal Commandant-General and members of the Executive. A cordon was placed along the Swazi border so that, if the commandos took flight in that direction, they might be headed off there. Hard pushed on all sides, Botha and his staff (their indispensable luggage and documents on pack-horses) left their camp at night. Next morning the enemy found nothing but burnt vehicles and a few lame mules.

General Ben Viljoen describes the above-mentioned meeting in Standerton district as follows:

> When I arrived, President Steyn, Generals de Wet, de la Rey, and Hertzog were on the spot, escorted by 150 men. It did one good

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to see how cordially and cheerfully the national leaders greeted each other. General de Wet was suffering from rheumatism, and the High Veld winter caused him great discomfort. Like President Steyn, however, he was in good fettle and full of spirit. We sat together, listening to each other's experiences. Sometimes there was general hilarity at the jokes that were cracked.

Nevertheless, fighting became an almost desperate and purposeless expedient, so far as the Boers were concerned. It amounted to a practically continuous evasion of the enemy's forces, overwhelming through sheer numbers. This was variegated by an occasional successful surprise, when English columns were relieved of their munitions, clothes, and food supplies. General Muller, for instance, in June had a success at Wilmansrust, where his 150 men took a camp by a night attack, capturing a pom-pom, rifles, ammunition, remounts, and sundry supplies, as well as 260 prisoners. On May 29 General Kemp had surprised the British under Dixon at Vlakfontein, south of the Magaliesberg, where he turned the enemy's guns on the soldiers! Fighting and fleeing, starvation and shivering, were the order of the day as well as night. De Wet continued his operations in the Free State, Beyers in Zoutpansberg and Waterberg, de la Rey in the Western Transvaal. Botha, supported by Generals Coen Brits and Grobler, as well as others, kept the eastern districts on the move.

Accompanied by but the skeleton of a body-guard, he made it his tactics to concentrate at intervals a few hundred, or a couple of thousand, burghers for surprise attacks. Bloukop, Standerton district, was his favourite signalling station for helio communication with his Executive or principal officers. A few telegraph operators stuck to his peripatetic staff until the end. The clear atmosphere of the South African plateau enables the reflection of the sun's rays to be seen at a distance of a hundred miles. The first duty of the Boers always was to avoid capture, in order that the supply of belligerents might not be cut short. Viljoen mentions a council-of-war that was to have been held in the

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winter of 1901. When he arrived at the venue, south of Ermelo, he says,

> there was hardly time to shake hands with members of the Government and to exchange a few words with General Botha: we had to run for it. For eight days in succession we were obliged to make tracks. Night after night the enemy attempted to seize us. It was only on the ninth day after my meeting with the Government that we had a chance of a short rest. Not long afterward, large movements were made, having for their object the capture of the Commandant-General and the Executive.

A Banishment Proclamation.—All in vain! The Boers always had the best of it, both sides depending for rapidity of movement on the same means, viz., horse transport. And the burghers knew how to nurse their mounts. The last guerilla war that was ever waged without motor-cars allowed of splendid resistance. This tenacity induced the British to issue a proclamation, on August 6, 1901, threatening all those who had failed to surrender by September 15 with perpetual banishment from South Africa. The radical ukase had not the slightest effect.

The Transvaalers became more hard-pushed as time went on, owing to the hostile attitude of the natives. The Free Staters were better off; they were even able to count on slight services on the part of the Basutos. In Zoutpansberg, however, natives fired on the Boers. On the High Veld women had to look for protection in British blockhouses. Botha came to an understanding with the Swazis, who undertook not to attack as long as their territory was respected. Everywhere else the native attitude was threatening.

Failure of Raid on Natal.—In spite of all these drawbacks, Boer resistance did not weaken. There was inexhaustible stamina to draw on, and courage remained steadfast. Early in September Botha got together a thousand men, intending to seize Dundee, Natal, as the first step on a southward march toward the Cape. This was meant primarily as a counter-demonstration to the Banishment Proclamation, and also as a rally to reinspire his burghers,

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who were fighting in scattered bands all over the Eastern Transvaal.

The column moved through the district of Piet Retief. At Blood River Poort, on the farm Spieshoek, an encounter took place on September 17; the British lost six officers and thirty-eight men killed or wounded. Six officers, including the officer commanding, with nearly 200 men, were taken prisoners. There were also taken three guns, 280 horses, and 30,000 rounds of ammunition.

The Boers went on, continually harassed by 16,000 British with forty guns. Encouraged by their recent success a party of intrepid burghers, fired by desire for booty, captured a thirty-six-waggon convoy at Melmoth, Zululand; this gave them foodstuffs and clothing. On September 27 Botha had engaged the strongly fortified positions at Itala, not far from Babanango. There were heavy losses on both sides, and Botha had to give up the idea of going on. At Pivaan River he fought a rearguard action, and *via* Piet Retief managed to regain the High Veld.

General Childers has given it as his opinion that Botha was bound to fail in his effort to realize what was essentially a lost hope, but that the enterprise showed great pluck. He admired not merely Botha's aggressive tactics, but also his skill in disengaging himself from an encircling movement, carried out by greatly superior forces.

On October 6 Botha, after a night march, attacked the British on his own farm in Vryheid. Heavy fighting lasted until the afternoon. The enemy, about 3000 strong with four guns and three pom-poms, remained in possession, owing to a number of Boers abandoning their positions, thinking that their side had already won.

On October 30, 1901, at Bakenlaagte, Botha (with Grobler) heavily defeated Colonel Benson. The British, 1600 strong with six guns, attacked 1000 Boers. General Childers writes as follows:

> One of the most remarkable successes in the guerilla war. Botha ordered a charge against the rearguard. The Boers, shouting and firing from the saddle, swept over a mile and a half of the

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ground, overwhelming the company of infantry, and capturing the rearmost. Near Gun Hill the Boers swung themselves from their ponies, and engaged our men at close quarters on foot. The defending force showed magnificent resistance, and were almost exterminated; the guns were captured.

General Brits' report on the battle of Bakenlaagte stated:

General Grobler, of Ermelo, General Viljoen and I time after time stormed to within eighty yards of the guns. Dismounting, we went in among the infantry. Fighting lasted from noon until nightfall. We took two Armstrongs, 147 shells, two loaded waggons, and 203 prisoners. The enemy had 500 killed or wounded. Both commanding officers, Benson and Guinnes, and 18 other officers were killed. The enemy was 2000 strong. We could not storm the camp, as that contained 25 Boer families and 44 of our men as prisoners. The enemy fought very pluckily, repeatedly refusing to surrender. Our losses: 14 killed, 48 wounded.

Kitchener, anxious as a result of this reverse, reported to his Minister, Brodrick: "If a column like Benson's, operating twenty miles outside our lines, is not fairly safe, it is a very serious matter, and will require a large addition to our forces to carry on the war."

Who could have improved on the sincerity of this tribute to the undiminished prowess of Botha and his burghers! Sir George Arthur writes: "There was beginning to be an uncomfortable conviction that the end of 1901 would find the Boer chieftains still unaccounted for. Botha was just outside the protected area in the Eastern Transvaal."

During this late phase of the war, the same author records, "a brand new force of Yeomanry had to be raised and sent overseas." Yeomanry were ever welcome to the Boers, being raw fighting material, well provided with choice rations, blankets, and sundry comforts.

A fresh method of wearing down the Boers was now tried. General Hamilton was sent out in order to hunt down the Transvaal Commandant-General by a series of night marches. Botha succeeded in escaping *via* the upper reaches of the Vaal. Lord Kitchener had pinned

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his faith to this process of attrition, and wrote to Lord Roberts on December 13: "I think about April we shall pretty well have exhausted the Boers," and, a few days later, "There is no doubt the Boers are much depressed in the Transvaal, and consider the game up. The leaders still make them stick to it."

The Beginning of the End.—Botha, with 800 burghers, took eighty men from General Plumer. At the same time, fatigue began to make itself felt in the commandos. Botha no longer hoped for any advantage to be derived from a continuance of the war. To a friend he confessed that it would be impossible to down the English. The same friend, however, witnessed an attempt, not long after, at Piet Retief to stiffen the burghers' backs. "So far," Botha said, "we have fought with the gloves on. Off with them! We shall never give in!"

In December 1901 General Ian Hamilton stated in a letter: "I never could have imagined such a gigantic system of fortifications, barriers, troops, and garrisons as actually exists." During the second half of January 1902 this General led another drive against Botha, who reported on January 29:

"Twelve enemy columns, each about 2000 strong, are after us. We have been hard put to it the last two months. On 18th Dec. we fought near Vaal River, capturing 5 officers, 140 men, 150 horses, 200 rifles and a good deal of ammunition. Our people, under Chris Botha, Brits, and Opperman, moved with me in the direction of the Drakensberg, near Wakkerstroom. On 23rd December we fought once more. After a warm two hours, superior strength forced us to retire. We pushed in the direction of Carolina, and on 3rd January had an engagement at Spitskop, on the day after at Bankkop. This was a big affair. The enemy stormed but were repulsed. We charged in our turn, inflicting a sharp defeat. I much regret the death of Brigadier Opperman, Field-cornet Moolman, my orderly M. v. Buuren, and one burgher; we had eight men wounded."

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Finally, Botha had to look for safety in the Vryheid hills. Even there he was pursued for a whole month before he managed to give his enemy the slip. "He disappeared, and was no more seen until he turned up at the Peace Conference at Pretoria," Sir George Arthur tells us; "his authority had of late just sufficed to keep his men in the field." As late as March 15 Lord Kitchener praised "the fine fighting spirit which still exists in the remaining Boers."

It was during the second half of 1901 that Botha's homestead, Waterval, Vryheid district, was dynamited without the slightest excuse of military necessity. The officer told off to do the work took snapshots of the house, before and after the deed; subsequently he sent these to Mrs Botha. Botha once told me that it was a relief to him when at last his house, too, suffered the fate of hundreds of dwellings belonging to his compatriots, who had remained staunch. He never appreciated the fact that his house of all others was for a long time spared by the British.

A despatch by Botha's brother-in-law Brigadier Emmett contains the following:

> On 27th August (1901) about 1500 British horse from Vryheid attacked Field-cornet Henderson at Hlobane. Fighting lasted from 11 a.m. until darkness. The enemy left forty dead and wounded on the field. The next day they went as far as Grondhoek, destroying all homesteads on their route, *i.e.*, those belonging to the Commandant-General, General Emmett, and General L. Meyer, M.E.C. They afterwards returned to Vryheid.

"*The War is Over.*"—On March 4, 1902, Lord Kitchener addressed a missive to the Transvaal Executive, covering the correspondence, initiated by the Premier of Holland, with a view to promoting a peace settlement. A few days later General de la Rey, after a sharp fight at Tweebosch, made Lord Methuen prisoner. The Acting-State President of the South African Republic sent Botha copies of the correspondence by messenger. No one, however, knew Botha's whereabouts; the letter could not be delivered. At last a British officer managed to run him to earth

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DESTRUCTION OF GENERAL BOTHA'S HOMESTEAD

From a photograph by the British officer charged with the duty of destroying the house.

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somewhere in the Piet Retief district during a religious service on Sunday, March 20.

Botha had no sooner read the despatches than he remarked to his secretary, Mr N. J. de Wet (who afterward became his Minister of Justice): "The war is over." He realized that the commandos would be prepared to lay down their arms, however painful they might find it to do so. The secretary voiced his doubts, but Botha's last word was: "Not one will refuse." And, as a fact, after May 31 following every one—including those who continued to hide in the mountains and forests—surrendered the rifle so dear to him. Botha had remarkable insight into the mentality of his people.

That afternoon he reached Vryheid under a guarantee of safe conduct, accompanied by half a dozen A.D.C.'s and an escort. Unfavourably impressed by the presence there of armed Zulus he declined to lay down his arms or to yield himself to the protection of the British garrison. He and his men returned to the veld for the night. (Those natives attacked a small Boer laager at Holkrans a few days later, killing every man they found.) The next morning Botha returned to Vryheid, leaving by train for Klerksdorp, where members of the Free State and Transvaal Governments were to meet. He arrived in the evening of April 7. In the interim he got in touch with General Coen Brits, who led the Standerton commando, informing the latter that an armistice was to commence forthwith. Brits was at the end of his tether, his burghers being without food. Botha advised him to seize without delay—before the hour at which fighting was to be suspended—the rounded-up cattle grazing on the Standerton commonage, without regard to the firing that was sure to come from the local garrison. The exploit was a complete success. A couple of years later General Clements, who commanded Standerton, confided to Botha his admiration of the dash with which Brits had carried out the enterprise. The Boer *moral* was maintained until the very last moment of the struggle.

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Botha's Generalship.—So Botha's career as a Boer general ended after two and a half years' fighting; his object, the preservation of his country's independence, had failed. As a Commandant-General he had shown that he possessed the qualities of a great soldier. A wonderfully developed sense of locality was his, intuitive penetration into the enemy's thoughts, good humour, and a strong constitution, although his digestive system at times left something to be desired. Without ever having studied strategy, Botha was perfectly at home on a vast battlefield, where he was opposed by a better equipped and more numerous enemy. Naturally, the concluding phases of the war were not particularly fascinating to a commander of his calibre, a strategist with wide purview and broad military genius. Nevertheless, he remained a redoubtable captain, even when he had but a few hundred men under him. Bold in the extreme, he was never reckless. He shared the rough-and-tumble of commando life with his burghers. True, there was for him practically no choice. Botha from the days of his youth had never minded physical discomfort. He welcomed having to deal with a variety of men, and was eminently approachable. Not being short-tempered, he knew how to bear both sorrow and disappointment with dignity. As Commandant-General, while treating his subordinates affably, he was easily obeyed.

In sharp contrast with those who relied upon harsh discipline even to the use of the sjambok, Botha was able to dispel by a joke tension among his burghers at the psychological moment. General Viljoen relates that, early in January 1901, a council-of-war was to be held at Hoedspruit, east of Middelburg. Botha had ridden through the night, crossing the enemy lines along the railway. On arrival at Hoedspruit he lay down, shaded by a tree. By 11 a.m. Viljoen turned up. His A.D.C.'s and Botha's welcomed each other so boisterously that the Commandant-General's nap was disturbed. He rose at once, however, to meet Viljoen with his well-known, friendly smile.

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The Dutch journalist Reyneke van Stuwe, who served on Botha's staff for two years, wrote in 1919, after the late Commandant-General's death:

> He was a man of great personal courage. Amidst a hail of bullets he rode about quietly, mounted on his dapple-grey charger; his example often inspired us in time of danger. It is a matter of history that, without qualms, he stuck to the road he had himself fixed upon, thoroughly convinced that by so doing he was serving the best interests of his people—impervious to slander and backbiting, undaunted by the desertion of some of his best friends.

The same author gives the following description of a fight that took place in Natal toward the end of 1901:

> I was standing near him when a despatch-rider brought in the first news. The enemy had well-manned trenches. Twenty-six of our men had been killed. In all my lifetime I shall never forget the cry of anguish Botha uttered. I can still visualize the painfulness of his look: twenty-six of his men fallen! It was terrible. Let no one, hardened by the world war of annihilation, in which thousands were slaughtered daily, smile at the mention of that number. They were human beings—fathers, many of them. The Afrikanders are members of one great family. Twenty-six killed in one assault was a catastrophe, a price at which any victory was bought too dearly. Let all those who think otherwise admire the field-marshal who, map spread out in front of him and telephone in hand, consigns regiments to decimating cross-fire. I learnt to love the humane general who suffered so strongly on hearing that cruel report.

During the final stage of the war Botha had great difficulty in connexion with ambulance work. Whenever he had to provide for a badly wounded man, the serious lack of medical comforts caused him profound sorrow.

No one in his *entourage* kept a diary or jotted down reminiscences of matters, great or small, that succeeded each other in kaleidoscopic profusion until May 31, 1902. Botha's thoughts in later years were in a different realm. He unlocked but seldom the treasury of his recollections. In it were contained, side by side with elevating memories of stirring events, others of disappointing and offensive

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acts on the part of compatriots, in whom he had reposed full confidence.

Of course, plenty of commando anecdotes gained currency in later years. It may be worth repeating that during the first half of 1901 Botha escaped the clutches of General Smith-Dorrien, who was doing his best to corner the Boer commander in Utrecht. Finally Botha broke through one night at One Tree Hill where Colonel Seely, who afterward became a member of the British Government, was standing guard. It was a rather hazy moonlight evening. Suddenly, Seely saw a horseman approaching. He fired, but the other escaped. Botha afterward told Seely that he must have been the one fired at, because he (Botha) rode to the spot in question that night in order to find out whether the enemy was there, and he could remember the bullet that failed to find its billet.

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VIII

BOTHA AT KLERKSDORP

In connexion with the first meeting—at Pretoria, on April 12, 1902—between Lord Kitchener and the members of the Boer Governments, Sir G. Arthur writes: "Briton and Boer yearned alike for peace." Toward the end of 1901 people in England very much wanted to see the end of the war, even though the vast majority continued to insist on the annexation of both Republics. There was a substantial measure of agreement with Lord Rosebery's speech in which he alluded to the desirability of a meeting, at some wayside inn, between a few well-wishers of the two parties, by whose friendly intervention *pourparlers* might come about. Late in January 1902 the Premier of Holland, Dr Kuyper, compared notes with Lord Lansdowne, who was at the head of the Foreign Office. Two documents gave concrete form to this process. Dr Kuyper acted off his own bat; he did not ask the Boer representatives in Holland and Belgium for their opinion. At the same time, I have reason to believe that he had been in touch with one of them, Mr A. D. Wolmarans, before instructing the Dutch Minister in London.

The correspondence reached Pretoria within a few weeks; copies were forwarded by Lord Kitchener early in March to the Acting-President of the South African Republic "in the field." It was the Transvaal Government that had formally started the war by its ultimatum to Britain; it was therefore the correct procedure to approach its members with the despatches. In this action by the British Government they recognized a fitting opportunity for the honourable pacification of an exhausted South Africa; and therefore they bestirred

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themselves in order to get into touch with the Free State Government.

Not until April 9 could a joint meeting take place between six Transvaalers and five Free Staters. Fortunately, an accurate record has been kept of the discussion between the two Governments as well as of the deliberations that followed at Vereeniging. No reader could escape the impression that the Klerksdorp discussions, regarded from the historical standpoint, by far transcend in importance the subsequent debates, unforgettable though the Vereeniging Conference may be as one of the most poignant moments in South African history.

The Transvaal and the Free State had agreed that neither was to negotiate individually with the enemy, and this was not the first occasion on which the leaders of both Republics formally took counsel on matters concerning peace. The circumstance that, in this instance, the consultation took place under the ægis of the enemy determined *ab initio* the final character of the negotiations that might be expected to take place with the British. Despite annexation proclamations as well as other statements and acts, England once again tacitly recognized the official status of the Boer Governments.

A Fundamental Difference.—When the discussion at Klerksdorp began, Botha, de la Rey, and de Wet were fairly unanimous as to the military outlook. They considered it not too good, but praised the spirit displayed by the burghers. The war, therefore, might very well go on, if one left out of consideration its duration and result. There was no doubt whatever about the equal and undiminished courage as well as fighting trim among Free State and Transvaal officers and burghers. The 16,000 men who were still in the field constituted a force of extraordinary efficiency. The detachments roving about in Cape Colony were just as determined, and able to indulge in the most difficult enterprises. At the end of 1901, de Wet—referring to one of the Cape rebels—had used a characteristic expression in the course of a speech to the

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Harrismith burghers: "Last week I met Assistant Chief Commandant Kritzinger. He is full of pluck; if the Republics conclude a peace that is not to the liking of the Colonials, he says, they will continue the war on their own in the Cape, until that, too, has obtained its freedom."

Botha rightly considered every burgher in these expert bodies at least the equal of a regular officer. Concerning their military value neither ally ever made the shadow of a reproach to the other, even though they occasionally differed as to the degree of punishment inflicted on them respectively by the British! It was the political aspects of the general situation that evoked, at Klerksdorp, fundamentally different views on the question of concluding the war. President Steyn did not wait very long for an opportunity of reiterating that "to him, independence was an essential condition for any peace." Should it become impossible to carry on the fight, "unconditional submission was preferable to making terms with the British."

This heroic concept—the retention of sovereign independence, or else the fall of the Boer nation—was fairly general among both Free State and Transvaal commandos. The crowd is always apt to favour the cutting of a Gordian knot rather than look for cool calculation with its uncertain, but at the same time promising, factors such as only a statesman dares to risk. As far back as the early stages of the war Botha had gained the conviction that, since reasonable prospect of victory no longer existed for the Boers, national interests henceforth demanded the preservation of the remaining vitality of the race. Now that their heroic resistance had enforced both the enemy's respect and the sympathy of humanity, he looked to treaty obligations for the guarantee of what was to be seized in the way of independence.

Just as diplomatic activity frequently amounts to unarmed war, it may be said that war often is no more than diplomacy, aggravated by the clash of arms. In this light one may regard the protracted struggle in South Africa, where Boer and Briton have long lived side by side. Though ranged

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in two separate political groups, both races saw in the whole of South Africa their inheritance. As against the Steyn doctrine of vengeful submission to British *force majeure*—leaving the conquered Boers not even under the slightest treaty obligations—Botha's school upheld the idea that it was desirable to bind the conqueror to the grant of self-government as well as to economic reconstruction in both ex-Republics. Botha realized from the unprecedented effort made by a distant overseas nation, in order not to allow South Africa to escape from its sphere of power—in those days British imperialism celebrated its final triumphs —that his country would stand defenceless against a repetition of a similar attempt. This would apply as well in the case of a war made by other Powers than England, unless Briton and Boer were taught to respect each other in common love of country, and for the sake of joint political expansion.

Among the British, one group could only see daylight provided the Boers were made politically impotent. Lord Milner, *e.g.*, had advocated "breaking the back of Afrikanderdom," metaphorically speaking, and in the political domain. Steyn, on his part, suffered from the delusion that the enemy would be overtaken by war-weariness, if only the struggle could be carried on by the Boers, so that the Republics would come out unscathed in the end. This had become such an *idée fixe* with him that afterward he told his biographer that Lord Morley in 1910 had said to him: "Had you persisted through the winter of 1902, there would have been at least a chance of your having regained your independence."

It so happens, however, that in 1910 President Steyn never left South Africa, any more than Lord Morley left Europe. Moreover, Morley wrote a letter when Steyn's statement to this effect was published. In it the British statesman categorically denied ever having met the Free State President. Be all this as it may, it is a fact that a nation, when attacked, can only counter a war of conquest with resistance until the last. It should be remembered,

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however, that the nature of the Boer War had undergone a change. Even in 1900 no less a person than Cecil Rhodes had indicated the difference, when he pointed out to his English-speaking countrymen that they would never succeed in reducing the Boers to an inferior national factor, even by military subjection.

The Essential Condition.—That the division, crystallized at Klerksdorp, was not a personal one but merely one of principle, or perhaps of temperament, was soon recognized. Steyn was at pains to escape any reproach of undue stubbornness, whereas Botha admitted: "We cannot blame each other for lack of unanimity." It is therefore easily understood that the attitude of the leaders toward each other was invariably marked by mutual consideration and good humour during the discussions. Botha, in opposing "War to the Knife," put the possibility of the enemy at some time or other treating the Boers as outlaws, instead of combatants. What would happen? The Boers would have to shoot a British officer for every burgher executed, "because nothing less than an officer is equal to one of our men." Supposing the leaders, one after the other, were either killed or exiled, the rank and file would be helplessly delivered into the hands of an arbitrary conqueror, who would be bound neither by treaty obligations nor by international law. If, on the contrary, the Boers insisted on autonomy, Botha argued, the ex-Republics might entertain sanguine anticipations of a prosperous future.

Divided by such divergences as these, the eleven members of the two Governments on April 12 met Lord Kitchener at Pretoria. President Steyn acted as spokesman, introducing a scheme that included independence as a *sine qua non*, but accompanied by a customs union, a railway pact, equal rights for Dutch and English educationally, franchise and arbitration.

London replied that independence would have to go, whereupon the Boers pointed out that in such questions there was no constitutional authority other than the will of

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the people. The issue would therefore have to be decided by direct popular representatives. After negotiations lasting five days it was resolved to have such representatives elected by the burghers on commando: thirty Transvaalers and an equal number of Free Staters. These were to meet toward the middle of May, at Vereeniging. Although the Free State forces were approximately but one-half as strong as the Transvaal commandos, the same number of representatives was granted to each.

The British Government was kept informed of the course of negotiations throughout. On April 19 the War Office cabled to Lord Kitchener to the effect that, whereas every opportunity could be given for the election of delegates by the commandos, military operations were not to cease meanwhile. "We are continuing to send reinforcements," the despatch concluded. It was clear that England was not inclined to suspend its warlike activities, in spite of peace *pourparlers*.

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IX

BOTHA AT VEREENIGING

SIXTY Boer delegates, together with the members of both Republican Governments, met at Vereeniging as guests of the British High Command. The situation had changed, inasmuch as they were aware of the fact that London would agree to early autonomy within the Empire, and that the Cape and Natal rebels would no longer be arraigned as criminals—they would merely be disfranchised. At the same time there was an unavoidable clash between those who favoured a prosecution of the war (with the practically inevitable sequel of subjection minus treaty rights or obligations) on the one side, and the advocates of a peace treaty, equally binding on the conqueror and the conquered, on the other. The Rev. Professor Kestell, well known in the Free State, may be quoted in illustration of the position. He attended the negotiations, and is therefore an authoritative witness:

> The idea (among the war party) was, in any case, to persist until the end of the deliberations. If, then, it appeared that the opponents of a continuance of the struggle were so numerous that it would be impossible for the ultra's to carry on the war alone, these would exclaim: "The pacifists are compelling us, also, to surrender. We were driven to it!" In that way, they considered, the world would see who held out to the end, at the last national gathering of Afrikanders.

Clearly, therefore, they did not really contemplate a long-drawn-out, murderous struggle of despair, but merely histrionics. Professor Kestell's explanation gives us an insight into the meaning of General de la Rey when, during the course of a pacific speech, he uttered a sharp reproof: "I rejoice to think that there are no leaders who, in their

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pride, might boast: 'We are able to continue'—only to surrender arms after our return."

De la Rey, however, originally belonged to the pro-war section. He as well as President Steyn and General de Wet disputed the right of delegates to judge the situation for themselves, and to act accordingly. This was the first move in the game, it being urged that delegates were only entitled to vote as their constituents had directed. Botha, Lucas Meyer, and Schalk Burger (Acting State President of the Transvaal), as against this, argued that, as the people were not cognizant of the actual state of affairs, their representatives were necessarily at liberty to decide as they thought fit. The matter was clinched when General (ex-Judge) Hertzog, supported by General (ex-State Attorney) Smuts pointed out that the status of delegates was that of plenipotentiaries. They were consequently qualified to resolve in accordance with their respective opinions, as these developed during the discussions.

On the first day at Vereeniging (May 15, 1902)—the Transvaal general Chr. Beyers having been elected chairman—Botha confined himself to supplying, briefly, information as to the military situation. He recorded the fact that the attitude of the natives became more minatory day by day. His chief handicap was the paucity of food and remounts. General de Wet, on his part, stated that the Basutos "were as pro-Boer as ever." Nine Free State commandants testified optimistically.

In the evening the Transvaalers gave their version. President Steyn's progressive illness prevented him from taking part. In his tent he principally conferred with Free State leaders.

A Great Speech.—Botha's great speech came on the day following, May 16. Undoubtedly it was a stunner for the war party. He explained the extreme awkwardness of the strategic position: the British had redoubled their efforts within the past few months; the Cape was no longer a military factor; to wait for European intervention was hopeless; the prospects of the burghers' families were

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LOUIS BOTHA IN 1902

From a sketch by Antoon van Welie in the collection of Dr C. J. K. van Aalst

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miserable to the last degree, especially in view of the constantly increasing black peril and of the enemy's refusal to look after women and children any longer. The Boers had held out so far because they had split their forces. If half the Transvaal were abandoned, and the commandos concentrated, the result would be fatal, because the enemy, too, would draw his troops together. Moreover, Botha argued:

"It has been said that we should fight to the bitter end, but nobody can tell me where that bitter end is. Is it there where every man is either buried or banished? Do not let us regard a period of universal burial as the bitter end. If we do, we shall be to blame for national suicide. As far as I personally am concerned, nothing prevents me from carrying on. My family is looked after. I have serviceable mounts. When I look at the enemy's actions, I am inclined to say 'Death before surrender!' I am bound, however, to consider not myself, but my nation and those who will have to do the fighting. I assure you that our plight is a bad one. If I put all the cards on the table, it is not in order to intimidate you, but so as to give you that correctness of perspective which it is my duty to convey. You are confronted with the necessity of taking a highly important resolution. I have always felt that, whenever we see that matters have come to such a pass that we are being starved into submission, we are bound to accept terms while we are still a nation, and before we have quite vanished as such. We cannot procrastinate until we have dwindled to a few thousand, and then hope to be able to negotiate. It will be too late then. If we are to negotiate at all, now is the time. If it be the will of God, we shall be obliged to come to terms, however humiliating. It will not do for us blindly to push on, saying that we put our trust in God. Miracles, of course, may happen, but it is neither for me nor for you to state what God's way with us is, or that the Lord is bound to preserve our independence."

And further:

"I feel that we have defended ourselves, and struggled better than any people in the world. Our small nation has,

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in the course of this fight, made more sacrifices than any people known to history. It would be a thousand pities if this nation were to go under, or fight until all are either dead or prisoners, when independence would be gone in any case. Unless we come to terms, our nation is absolutely ruined; if, on the other hand, we do make terms, we shall obtain responsible government, and our language rights will be maintained. Should a famine visit us without contractual peace obligations, the British may supply food provided the recipient takes the oath of allegiance. Are we to fight until we are completely overwhelmed, so that thirty years will have to elapse before we can raise our heads again?"

This striking speech was followed by de la Rey's surprise packet, by which the war-to-the-knife section got into a hopeless minority. During the second phase of the war the Western Transvaal commandos were able to co-operate more easily with the Free Staters (who were not so difficult of access) than with their compatriots on the High Veld. In those days there were no railway lines to facilitate effective military penetration into the Western districts. In that way community of thought arose between Steyn, de Wet, and de la Rey, as evinced at Klerksdorp. The victory over Lord Methuen, a few weeks prior to the Conference, had heightened the Western commandos' self-confidence. During de la Rey's absence, however, the British inflicted a couple of painful defeats on them. Moreover, Botha took the opportunity of a confabulation with his fellow-general, whom he had known as a colleague in the First Volksraad. De la Rey became convinced of the soundness of Botha's views; fearlessly he stated his case to the other delegates.

This conversion meant a serious loss to the extremists. Henceforth they had to be looked for chiefly among the Free Staters. These were mostly juniors, thoroughly conscious of their military prestige, but not by any means the peers of their chief Commandant (General de Wet) or of many a Transvaal officer as regards actual exploits. The

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seniors could point to greater experience and a better realization of responsibility.

"Since my arrival," de la Rey said, "and after I learnt how matters stand in districts other than mine, the objections to a continuance of warfare appeal to me. The time, I think, has come for negotiations with the enemy, lest the door be bolted in our faces."

How was the spokesman of the war party to react? De Wet got up after de la Rey, saying: "I will assume the correctness of all that has been said. And yet the Free State will not cease firing. At our meetings with the burghers a voice as of thunder went up in the cause of independence. To me, therefore, but one way lies open."

The debate came to an end on the following day. Unanimously the two Governments were instructed to appoint a commission, entitled to negotiate on any subject. The result was to be submitted to the meeting of delegates. Botha had once more to proceed to Pretoria; de Wet, de la Rey, Hertzog, and Smuts accompanied him.

Negotiations at Pretoria.—On May 28 they had conversations with Lord Kitchener and Lord Milner until the evening—with intervals for awaiting replies from London. Lord Milner at first tried to get the five Boer generals to sign a document (authority to be obtained by them at Vereeniging) recognizing the annexation proclamations, and promising that the burghers would lay down their arms, trusting that their individual liberty and property would be respected. This clumsy scheme could not succeed. Botha emphatically declared: "We came here with the earnest desire to make peace. I fancy that, if our scheme is carried out, Boer and Briton will be able to live side by side. I assume that neither party wishes to oppress the other race. The peace we want is one that shall satisfy both parties, and be permanent in South Africa."

Is this the language of a knocked-out suppliant, creeping in the dust under the conqueror's mailed fist in order to receive a few concessions by way of charity? The act of

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submission, proposed by Lord Milner, was condemned by Botha in these terms:

"We desire a peace honourable to both parties. As I understand this document, however, we are asked to go much further than that. It makes us not only surrender our independence, but binds every burgher hand and foot. Where does the honourable peace come in, as far as we are concerned? If we are to cease fighting, it can only be as men who have to live and die in this country. We cannot accept a peace that would leave the iron in our souls. I shall do anything in my power to come to an understanding, but I think this document goes altogether too far."

What the Commandant-General, as a man of tact, could not as yet say to the embittered delegates at Vereeniging—"Boer and Briton must inhabit South Africa as neighbours, in mutual tolerance"—he repeatedly urged to Lord Milner. He did it all the more emphatically because the two who negotiated on behalf of Britain were strangers to South Africa. The success or otherwise of the peace pact would, however, in the first place affect English-speaking South Africans. It is true that, among loyalists, Boerophobia was stronger than among the general ruck of British soldiers; this may be due to the fact that the Boers had proved the loyalists' superiors in the field. Botha, however, realized that subsequent to the war the loyalists would remain, after the last soldier had left our shores. Hence it became necessary to obtain the complete political and social equality of the two races.

Opposite Lord Kitchener and Lord Milner—oversea men—Botha sat at that conference table as the embodiment, not merely of the ever-ready Boer warrior, but of all South Africans, whatever their descent. As a diplomat he did his best to save the ex-Republics any post-war pressure England might choose to exercise; as a patriot he pleaded for solid foundations to a South Africa worth living in for both Briton and Boer.

He succeeded in obtaining a draft which subsequently became the Peace Treaty. After prolonged discussions the

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sum of £3,000,000 was finally fixed upon as the amount required to assist economic reconstruction after the war. Lord Kitchener, by his accommodating attitude, neglected no opportunity of making up for Lord Milner's *intransigence*.

Fresh Deliberations.—On May 29 the meeting at Vereeniging was resumed. President Steyn had to leave the place on the identical day, attended by a medical man, and, more dead than alive, obliged to seek a cure abroad. He was penniless. The Boers gave him the balance of their Exchequer—£700 in cash. Throughout the war the Free State had been financed by the Transvaal Treasury. As recently as the winter of 1901 the Free State Government had received £15,000 "on loan." The southern allies were occasionally able to import clothing, etc., *via* Basutoland. President Steyn felt relieved that he need not affix his signature to the Peace Treaty. For those who signed, their act was one of almost superhuman volition and self-control.

For three days the resumed negotiations at Vereeniging lasted. The Free Staters, recognizing that the "war party" was in the minority, were in a hurry to come to a decision. If, as appeared likely, they were outvoted, posterity would always be able to point to them with pride as the final champions of Boer Republicanism and Boer ideals. Once more Botha made a long speech, in which he adjured his hearers to use their common sense, and to stand together, "in order that after peace we may cling together as well, looking for ways and means of assisting widows and orphans by sending representatives to Europe and America in order to get financial aid in rebuilding our farms and helping our people."

Reacting to a hint from General Smuts—to the effect that a simple majority in favour of or against the Peace Treaty would not meet the case—Botha, accompanied by General de la Rey, visited General de Wet in his tent, early in the morning of the last day of the conference, and laid before the latter a proposal that only in the event of at least two-

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thirds of the delegates voting in favour of it should the Treaty be ratified—thus at least forty out of sixty members must decide the fate of South Africa. The onus in connexion with the success or failure of the peace negotiations was hereby laid upon the extremists, thereby "calling the bluff" off those who, whilst no more anxious to continue the fight than were the others, yet desired to avoid the ignominy of surrender by agreement.

Despite inequality of fighting forces—the Transvaalers having a larger number of men in the field—each Republic was represented at the conference by thirty delegates. If the war was to go on, unless two-thirds of the assembly voted for peace, a good number of extremists would be compelled so to vote, instead of only Transvaalers being on the Treaty side. The Botha–de la Rey proposal, however, was never formally brought forward. Evidently General de Wet realized that, in the event of such a thing happening, he and his adherents could not refuse to support such an heroic gesture. Were not the extremists posing as the advocates of war *à outrance* in maintaining the struggle for independence! And here was laid before them the opportunity of rendering all too easy the rejection of the Peace Treaty—a course unwelcome alike to de Wet himself and to his followers. Botha's attitude demanded a change of tactics. General de Wet was not long in reaching his decision. The only course left was to offer his support and that of his followers in the cause of peace. Calling his Free Staters together, he persuaded them to ratify the Treaty. In the afternoon of May 31 the Treaty of Vereeniging was passed by fifty-four votes to six. Both Free Staters and Transvaalers equally shared in the pain as well as in the 'ignominy' of their surrender

Botha has been charged with owing his success with General de Wet to an argument on his part, urging that unanimity in accepting the Treaty would in later years be helpful in obtaining a joint repudiation of the obligations it imposed! Even in 1902, however, Botha's aspiration, as sketched in these pages, was so definitely in favour of

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the future co-operation of Boer and Briton that the allegation may be summarily rejected.

Two British officers were called by Botha into the meeting tent. Amidst death-like silence he informed them that the Treaty had been ratified. During the same night of May 31 the document was executed at Pretoria by the members of the two Boer Governments, Lord Kitchener signing on behalf of the British War Office, and Lord Milner on that of the Colonial Secretary. The famous annexation proclamations were therefore tacitly disavowed. The incorporation of the Boer Republics into the Empire by way of treaty had, as far as England was concerned, the advantage that international law had been complied with. The Boers profited, because their future was contractually guaranteed by their late enemy, the rest of the world never having stirred a finger for their protection.

Two Free State Opinions.—It is interesting to note the opinion of two Free Staters—*i.e.*, from a quarter without any predilection in Botha's favour—as to the most prominent figure in the course of the negotiations. In his *Life of de Wet*, Professor Kestell unbosoms himself as follows:

> Here, at Vereeniging, I learnt to esteem and respect Commandant-General Louis Botha among other military chiefs more than I had ever done before. At the last moment they made their final sacrifice for the sake of the people. It was especially General Botha who, at Vereeniging as he had done previously at Klerksdorp, repeatedly drew attention to the national aspect of things. He never tired of referring to the Colonials who had fought on our side. For the people's sake the war lords immolated their military pride. So as to be able to take care of the people, they recommended the delegates to fall in with the British proposals.

On May 30 General Hertzog spoke to the assembled delegates as follows:

> I shall always respect Commandant-General Louis Botha; for he has shown himself to be possessed of a heart that feels all these things (the brunt of the war), while he has had the courage to tell his people, and us, exactly how matters stand.

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History soon justified Botha. Five years after peace, the former Free State Chief Commandant was, at Bloemfontein, acting as Minister of Agriculture in his own autonomous Government. Can it be that passionate Christiaan de Wet ever pondered the fact that he owed the position he then occupied especially to Botha's far-sightedness during those critical moments at Vereeniging? Seven years after the conclusion of peace, President Steyn consulted his physician in Europe on the practicability of his accepting the Premiership of a United South Africa. Did the Free State patriot, during the period when he weighed the considerations centring round a Premiership, ever realize that he had above all things Botha's courageous advice to thank for such possibilities as existed? In any case, it must have caused Botha satisfaction to read in de Wet's *Reminiscences*, which appeared shortly after peace: "Continuance of the struggle would have led us into pitch-dark night. We simply could not think of fighting on." And the final sentence of that book read: "Let us be faithful to the new Government, as a matter of self-preservation. Let us be true, as befits a nation that has done what we did."

Torture!—An extremely distasteful duty was awaiting the principal Boer leaders. They had undertaken to reveal to the burghers who were still in the field what was to be the end of their striving, and to promote a rapid, orderly disarmament. Botha travelled for days in the south-eastern part of the High Veld in order to visit the scattered commandos, and to tell his faithful comrades-in-arms that South Africa no longer needed their military services; they were to hand in their rifles. Nothing less than a deep-rooted sense of duty enabled him to set foot on this final portion of the *via dolorosa*. If the decision had depended on the men still out on the veld, the treaty would never have been ratified! What Botha must have felt and suffered can be gauged from de Wet's confession, given in his *Reminiscences*:

> Was I to keep on, going from commando to commando, enduring the torture of witnessing the surrender of arms? No,

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that would have been more than I could bear! I resolved, with regard to the remaining commandos, simply to tell the burghers what had occurred, and then to leave, before the men gave up their rifles.

Botha, however, endured the torture. And he was to bear a great deal more in the years that lay ahead. Heart-broken, he took final leave from his staff officers at Skaap-koppie, six miles from Vryheid. He expressed his deep regret at his inability to do very much in the way of assisting them to find a new career. As related to me by Mr Louis Esselen, a member of the staff, his words were: "Many thanks for your faithful services. It oppresses me that I can do nothing else for any of you, and that I can give no more than thanks. One consolation remains to all of you: You can now go and rest a little. As for me, my real work only begins at this hour. The day when rest will be mine, will be the day when they lower me into the grave. The sacrifices we had to make were terrific; but we are going to see a Greater South Africa."

Mr J. P. Jooste—now a member of the Executive Council of the Transvaal Province—has described to me how, in his presence, Botha met the Wakkerstroom commando in order to explain matters to them, preparatory to their surrender of arms. It was a particularly chilly evening. The men were down-hearted; sadly, sitting round their fires, they sang their melancholy songs. Mr Jooste, who sat beside Botha, supported by the wheel of a waggon, could not help asking: "General, had I to be in the field with you for three years solely in order to have to witness all this misery?"

The answer was: "No, my boy, to-morrow begins our great task of building a South African nation."

Botha had already said a couple of times: "I feel my inner struggle to be a thing of the past," nor did he enlarge on the theme. Those who heard him use the words subsequently interpreted his meaning as follows: I am convinced that the hour of the cessation of hostilities heralds a new future for South Africa. It will be essential to have

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a lasting peace, even though it be on a basis other than that of the retention of our independence.

It was as a Transvaaler that Botha had begun the war; as a South African he signed the Peace Treaty. For many days and many nights he had reflected on the causes of the division that had punished his country so severely, jeopardizing the whole of its future. At last he knew where his duty, his vocation, pointed. His task it would be to confer on the whole of Southern Africa lasting peace.

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X

BOTHA IN EUROPE

THROUGHOUT the career of the South African Republic British propinquity had a paralyzing influence on the country's sound and safe development. The protective factors, ensuring the age-long existence of small States elsewhere, were absent. In name a sovereign power, the Republic actually was far less free than the Union of South Africa now is as partner in a world empire. It is, in view of this, a curious reflection that no sooner had the 'paramount power,' in 1902, succeeded in overwhelming the Transvaal, converting it into a Crown colony by force, than Great Britain's undisputed supremacy in South Africa began to wane. Dominion status, universally accepted to-day, managed to level England's constitutional position within the Empire to an equality with that of the other States in the space of twenty-five years.

Shortly after the events of 1902 the new colony north of the Vaal attained great prominence, not in South Africa only, but in London as well. The interesting period 1902-7 shows how Botha was first instrumental in helping to defeat the Government that had caused the fall of the Republics. Afterward he helped to bring about the unification of an autonomous sub-continent. Is it not a remarkable fact that it should have been the Transvaal that became the lesion as a result of which Joseph Chamberlain's brand of imperialism bled to death? And that an ex-general of the Boers should have played a principal part in the victory at the polls of the Liberal Party, leading to Campbell-Bannerman's premiership and all it eventually meant to South Africa? The Transvaal and the Free State shortly afterward obtained self-government, and in consequence

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the four colonies now forming the Union combined. Once they had entered John Bull's family circle, the former Boer States made themselves felt, thanks to most peaceable tactics, in a wonderfully effective manner. Theirs was a prominent share in the birth of the 'third' British Empire, the modernized "British Commonwealth of Nations."

On the eve of peace, something had happened that was typical of the subsequent evolution of South African affairs. Negotiations between the Boer delegates and Lords Kitchener and Milner were proceeding anything but smoothly, owing to the latter's unbending attitude. For a moment it seemed as if it would prove impossible to end the war by agreement. Late in the evening Lord Kitchener took General Smuts aside, predicting that a Liberal landslide was a probability of the near future in England, as a result of which the prospects of early autonomy for the ex-Republics would improve. This hint to the effect that Milnerism was not destined to permanence made the Boers look upon the British pro-consul's *intransigence* in a fresh light. Henceforth they were able to bear with his demands in more hopeful mood.

Lord Milner Takes Over.—The leaders did not tarry. Within three weeks of the conclusion of peace all arms had been surrendered. On June 21, 1902, Lord Milner was able to come (from Johannesburg) to Pretoria in order formally to take over the civil administration, the chief officials having taken the oath of allegiance. A lunch at which Generals Botha and de la Rey were present was given. The Governor-General afterward had a long interview with them, continued the next day, on urgent repatriation measures. An oath of fealty was demanded before prisoners-of-war could be sent back to their country as British subjects. Many of them, in the Bermudas and India, resented the peace, charging their leaders with treason. They refused to take any oath. Some of them resolutely persisted in refusing to sign even an act of submission to the Treaty. This necessitated a journey by General de la Rey to Ceylon in order to explain matters to

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them. The disposal of the concentration camps, too, required a great deal of discussion. Botha's proposal to entrust Boer experts with the control of economic reconstruction in the country districts was not entertained.

In connexion with this matter Botha had already suggested at Vereeniging that money should be collected overseas. At its conclusion, the Conference appointed him, with de la Rey and de Wet, to carry out the idea. Botha hastily attended to family and private affairs prior to leaving. For that purpose he paid a visit, in July, to Natal, where he openly proclaimed his faith in South Africa's future as part of the Empire. At Capetown the Dutch community gave the trio a warm welcome. They were a tragic little company! How different in temperament, character, talents! How widely their vision of the fortunes in store for their country and people varied! All they had in common was their pure, indestructible patriotism. De Wet was irrepressible, de la Rey impressionable, Botha, above all, matter-of-fact.

In order to make the object of their journey perfectly plain they deemed it advisable to publish at Capetown a farewell message to their compatriots. In it they mentioned the desire to collect funds, while discouraging emigration of any sort and counselling patient endurance. *Nil desperandum!* Late in July the three were on their way to the great world outside, where they had never before set foot. How little did they anticipate the disillusionment, annoyance, and disappointment that were awaiting them in Europe, excited as it still was over the Boer war. Four months of anxiety and fatigue made the enterprise an unforgettable nightmare to Botha during the rest of his life.

King Edward and his 'Wife.'—On August 17 (the day after their arrival at Southampton) Botha and de la Rey, introduced by Lord Kitchener, waited upon the late King Edward, who happened to be on his yacht at Cowes. The generals were invited—it was not very tactful—to a naval review to take place at once, but begged to be excused. The King, though the reverse of pro-Boer, received his

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former enemies with sincere cordiality, introducing them to the Queen as to "my wife," in order to mark the informal character his Majesty wished to confer on the occasion. Better than anyone, the King realized the harm to England's prestige arising from the restive enthusiasm thrilling all humanity on behalf of the handful of heroic champions of freedom, out in the wilds of South Africa, who had taken up arms against a powerful world empire. Any universal foreign sentiment or opinion is a force that no nation, however powerful, can afford to ignore. It did not avail to ride the high horse, and tell foreigners that John Bull's affairs were none of their business. It was with a feeling of relief that the King welcomed these chivalrous, new subjects of his who were being honoured everywhere.

Without further ceremony the three left for Holland on the very next day. They wanted to consult President Kruger, together with the other high officials of the ex-Republics, before they eventually returned to England to deal with the Colonial Office. Botha's arrival in Holland was all the more moving, because it gave him the joy of reunion with his wife, who had spent the last year of the war there in voluntary retirement. Shortly after her historic meeting with her husband at Botha's Berg she had gone to Holland. To Kruger she had conveyed the message that the Boers would be able to hold out another year, but that there would be more running than fighting! The aged President, instead of rejoicing at the news that resistance would last as long as that, brusquely replied: "Nonsense! All that is merely women's chatter." And yet Botha had gauged the situation aright, as proved by the date of the Peace Treaty.

At Rotterdam and The Hague, as in London and Southampton, the generals perforce accepted the loudest of welcomes. At The Hague Botha replied: "We have not come in order to take part in any festivities. We represent an extremely unhappy people. We are unhappy, because we fought for our freedom and independence, as in duty bound."

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MRS BOTHA IN 1902

From a portrait by Antoon van Welie in the collection of Dr C. J. K. van Aalst.

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Determined Resignation.—The Boer officials at Brussels and in Holland had not been in sufficiently regular contact with South Africa to be completely posted as to the actual state of affairs that had come about. Consequently, it was but natural that the real peace atmosphere, born as a result of the Vereeniging Treaty, had not penetrated to them, and that they could not quite see eye to eye with Botha on all matters of high policy. Pro-Boer excitement on the Continent, in Ireland, and in America had led to anti-British demonstrations, as it was bound to do. There was yet no time to make it plain to the public that what had been a quite natural attitude, while the war was still being waged, no longer met the situation that had since arisen. The Transvaal Embassy at Brussels had carried on an efficient agitation, organizing many committees, even in far-off Russia. It was now unable, within a few weeks, to get the whole world to realize the tremendous change that had occurred in the position of the Boer people. Botha himself, sixteen years later, stated in the South African Parliament that the annexation of the Republics was an act that no one would ever be able to condone. At the same time, while talking to the Free State and Transvaal officials in Europe during their visit, the three generals did their best to induce those men to share their own determination to abide by the settlement that had been reached.

Others, who had likewise arrived in Europe from the scene of war, loudly vented their irreconcilable feelings. Almost simultaneously, President Steyn—physically ill, but with a clear mind—made a momentary appearance in England. On arrival at Southampton, on August 1, he had himself carried to a Dutch steamer, without showing the least desire to get into touch with London. An invincible aversion to accepting the understanding, created by the Peace Treaty, was shown by the passionate and inflexible attitude of President Reitz, ex-State Secretary of the Transvaal, who landed at Naples. His was an irreconcilable personality, interpreting the feelings of a section of the Bitter-enders. The vote of the fifty-four who had favoured

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the Treaty at Vereeniging did not mean that the whole of the nation immediately adjusted itself to the new situation. It took years before the bulk of the generation of 1900 had accepted the consequences of what had been decided upon. In 1919 a deputation, led by General Hertzog, attempted to re-establish South Africa's position of twenty years previously.

Before starting on their begging campaign the generals wished to meet the Colonial Secretary, in order to find out whether his Government would be prepared to exceed the three million, destined to alleviate the plight of the Boers. On August 31, 1902, Botha and the two who shared his mission returned to the Metropolis. In a modest hostelry, away from the centre of things, they quietly awaited the date appointed for their interview with Chamberlain. The leaders of the Liberal Party were not able to lend a great deal of support. They formed but a weak Opposition, the Boer war having seriously affected the unity and strength of the party.

The matter-of-fact bearing of the three, who did not care in the least to see themselves lionized, combined with the unceasing, defiant anti-British gestures of numerous Continental pro-Boers, considerably chilled the atmosphere in which, on September 5, the interview with Chamberlain took place. On account of allegations that had appeared in Continental newspapers (to the effect that the Peace Treaty would have to be revised) the Minister made it a condition that no revision could be discussed. The generals, on their part, expressed a desire that conversations should be principally concerned with more liberal compensation for their needy fellow-burghers and complete amnesty for rebels. The obstinate opposition against the annexation, voiced by well-meaning persons in both the Old World and the New, was hampering the three generals; their task it was to carry out the dirty work of, hat in hand, getting people to contribute (especially in England), if necessary in the form of a loan.

At the Colonial Office.—The Colonial Office interview—an extremely formal business—was attended by Chamber-

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lain, Lord Kitchener, two high officials of the department, and an interpreter. A shorthand note was taken, and afterward published. Botha, the mouthpiece and intellectual leader of the trio, regretted the absence of any amnesty for rebels, which was to have been proclaimed at King Edward's coronation. Amnesty, he said, was indispensable to a real peace in South Africa. The Colonial Secretary and Lord Kitchener denied that there had been any such promise. Botha had to be satisfied with their assurance that, if the Cape and Natal Governments were prepared to show leniency, no objection would be raised by the Colonial Office. It should be placed on record that, during the late Sir Starr Jameson's premiership of Cape Colony, complete amnesty, involving the restoration of all political and civil rights, was granted in 1906. Natal, too, treated its rebels leniently.

The return of the Boers then in Europe was the second item on the agenda. Chamberlain drew attention to President Reitz's demeanour. Botha replied that he and his compatriots deserved to be trusted, and should not be allowed to suffer on account of one individual. The Minister admitted being convinced of their *bona fides*; he promised to retain his faith in it, unless he was given occasion for doubt. The remaining points at issue were: return of prisoners; the oath or declaration to be taken by them; security of title to ground held by burghers, and the return to them of farms confiscated by virtue of drastic proclamations. It looked as if the conqueror had some scheme of freezing-out Boer owners (who found it impossible on the conclusion of peace to pay their debts) so as to make their holdings available for the occupation of favoured immigrants.

Last came the greatest question of all, in spite of its formal exclusion from the agenda. Botha, in a few words, accentuated the inadequacy of the three million pounds, contrasting the sum with the vastness of the assets contained in the incorporated territories. Chamberlain, however, refused to discuss the subject. He closed the interview

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with the assurance that, if the Boers would only meet himself and his nation half-way, the British would prove to be as valuable friends as they had been honest enemies.

The Minister's refusal, coupled with the chilly atmosphere that weighed upon the interview from first to last, was to Botha proof of the hopelessness of any further attempt to obtain funds in Great Britain. The psychological moment had either been neglected or had not yet arrived.

Europe's Boer Worship.—And so the generals left the United Kingdom. On September 10 they met Dr Kuyper, the Netherlands Premier, whose initiative had led to the end of the war. The day after, there was a festive reception at Amsterdam, prepared by public committees, which had seen to it that the honoured trio should be greeted with cordial ovations. Antwerp was the next place; here enthusiasm was so terrific that General de Wet was obliged, in the course of a speech, to declare that the object of his visit was eleemosynary—not personal applause.

Back to Holland, where on September 25 the well-known "Appeal to the Civilized World" had appeared, in which Botha, de Wet, and de la Rey asked for financial support. In England people (unjustly perhaps) took great offence at this pamphlet. The progress of the begging campaign in Holland made the generals optimistic. Dr Leyds did what he could in order, by protective measures, to maintain an atmosphere favourable to their mission. In a small provincial town they collected £2000.

In Brussels, Paris, and finally in Berlin the three were overwhelmed with ovations, demonstrating undeniable and progressive Boer worship on the Continent. Material contributions, however, did not show any tendency to corresponding liberality. Before the publication of their Appeal they had received from Mr Henry Phipps, of the Carnegie Steel Trust, a gift of £20,000, to be spent in consultation with the British Colonial Office. Donations of this magnitude did not recur. The great financiers of the Continent regarded the Boer problem as settled; their

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standpoint was that the generals had better pin their faith to the British Government. It was principally the man in the street, hardly able to afford more than acclamations, whose mite helped to make up the total collected.

The contrast between the transports of sympathetic excitement among the people and the immaculate neutrality of governing circles filled the unsophisticated travellers from elementary South Africa with painful astonishment. At Berlin a tragi-comic complication aggravated their spleen. The question arose: were they to wait upon the Kaiser? The world had yet to learn of the fact that William II had presented the British High Command with an ideal anti-Boer plan of campaign. The monarch had no particular reputation as a generous philanthropist. Were the three to crave an audience, or should they await an invitation from the imperial palace? Could any visit take place, except under the auspices of the British Ambassador? A profound Press polemic developed, just as if an incorrect gesture could have precipitated an international crisis! In the end, there was no audience, and the three were officially ignored. As regards wild enthusiasm, however, their reception in the German capital beat that in the other great cities, if possible. No less a person than Count Herbert Bismarck piloted the distinguished visitors through the Reichstag building, where they were the objects of the most flattering attention.

On October 22 the generals, laden with European glory and popularity—at the same time with suspicion on the part of Britain—returned to London. The total collected fell short of £125,000. On November 1 General de Wet started on his way back to the Free State, supported by the pleasant consciousness that he, at any rate, had succeeded in effecting a considerable improvement in his private finances. He had sold, at an eminently satisfactory figure, the copyright of his war reminiscences, set down by him with unflagging zeal during the first stage of his journey.

A Sensational Article.—*The Contemporary Review* of November 1 contained an article by Botha that attracted

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widespread attention. Under the title "The Boers and the Empire" it argued candidly and cogently that England's interest would be served by a generous policy in regard to the economic reconstruction of the ex-Republics. It pointed out that it would not pay to lavish vast sums on the maintenance of a South African garrison, amounting to some hundred thousand men, while the Boers were being systematically pushed out of their estates, and were refused the means of re-establishing themselves. Instead, the writer said, they should be honoured with British confidence, to which they had a right. Calmly and logically Botha adduced that the Boers' new status of British subjects entitled them to bring home to the British Government its duty of assisting them to find a way out of the misery caused by material wants. No British colony, Botha said, can be governed against the wishes of the population.

During their visit to the Continent, he added, the three generals had abstained from anything to which British sentiment could legitimately object on political grounds. Once more he urged complete amnesty to rebels as well as permission for the ex-Boer officials in Europe to return. He concluded by advising Britain to help the Boers, not simply as an act of humanity, but as a matter of high policy.

The British public appreciated his sober language. Five days later, the man who had published this straightforward and courageous statement sat in the gallery of the Commons, where members debated a grant of eight millions to cover the cost of the liquidation of the Boer War. Chamberlain, who had introduced the necessary measure, announced that he intended visiting South Africa in order to ascertain whether the appropriation would suffice; if not, he would ask for more. The money was voted unanimously. Botha's final appeal, made this time to the British people, had not been in vain.

Indisposition delayed his return to the Transvaal. This gave him an opportunity of getting to know prominent men who were taking an interest in South African affairs. The day after Botha's unsatisfactory Chamberlain interview

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LOUIS BOTHA

From a portrait drawn in 1902 for *De Week* by Antoon van Welie,
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he had written to Lord Courtney (who was taking the waters at a German spa) requesting advice as to the best way of collecting funds in England; he asked for the names of other friends, who might be sounded for their opinions. Botha also communicated with a few journalists, and accepted invitations for private dinners. He met the Opposition leader, Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, at a party that included a member of the Cabinet. Everything, as Sir Henry was careful to point out, was therefore quite in order. Lord Shaw, in his *Memoirs*, mentions a little dinner attended by Mr Lloyd George and the late Mr Massingham; Botha expressed his deep gratitude for what the Liberals had been able to do for the benefit of South Africa.

Two Successes.—Lord Courtney recorded in writing the impression of strength and moderation created by the Boer generals. In the course of a personal meeting with him, they renewed their plea for rebel amnesty and financial support for their ruined people. On the day before their return to South Africa Botha and de la Rey paid a farewell visit to the Colonial Secretary. Chamberlain was still upset by the fuss that had been made of them on the Continent. He had to listen while Botha requested him to delay the unification of British South Africa, until such time as each of the four colonies should have become autonomous. Botha also criticized Lord Milner's refusal to give the Dutch language a place in the curriculum of elementary schools for Boer children.

At last, on December 13, 1902, Botha was able to board a steamer on the way back. It was high time: the Colonial Secretary himself was on the point of leaving. Hurriedly a gathering of as many Afrikander leaders as possible had to be organized. Although private contributions to the Boer fund had proved a failure, Botha had two successes to book, viz., the eight millions for the relief of distress and Chamberlain's own visit to the ravaged subcontinent. No colonial secretary of any European power had ever undertaken an official journey in order to study a remote possession on the spot. No wonder, then, that

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the voyage made a universal sensation, especially among those who saw, and applauded, in it the glorious realization of his Imperialist aspirations.

Four months of hustle in Western Europe, the result of his own suggestion at Vereeniging, proved a precious schooling to the acute Transvaaler. The episode gave him a first-hand insight into overseas conditions, which stood him in excellent stead during the years that followed. His realization of what constituted sound policy for South Africa was clarified by his London-Berlin experiences—his self-reliance as a political leader strengthened by his brief contact with men and things in Europe.

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XI

BOTHA AND LORD MILNER

WHEN early in 1900 the chances of war were turning against the Boers, Rhodes (after the relief of Kimberley) anxiously watched the course of events from Capetown. Lord Roberts, with childlike faith, had declared the war virtually over. Rhodes had the courage to address a strongly anti-Boer meeting at Capetown, more or less in the following terms:

> You people imagine the Boers are beaten! Nothing of the sort. The Dutch have not been beaten. It is only Krugerism that has gone under. The Dutch to-day are just as virile, just as unconquered, as ever they were; the country is theirs just as much as it is yours. You will have to work together, and live together, exactly as in the past. Do not let there be any vaingloriousness, any vulgar triumph over your Dutch neighbours. Let them feel that bitterness is a thing of the past, and that more than ever it is necessary to co-operate.

Were not these sensible words altogether applicable to the Dutch of 1903?

Mr Chamberlain's arrival was the signal for a fresh outburst of jingoism on the part of the Imperialist section of the population, the reverse of suitable for the cultivation of better relations between Briton and Boer. Loud demonstrations greeted the Minister everywhere. The Dutch-speaking section looked on, mindful of the fact that the triumphal entry of the Colonial Secretary had been rendered possible by soldiers from overseas—not by those whose plaudits were filling the air.

In January 1903 Chamberlain appeared at Pretoria. Botha had seen to it that a numerous deputation was on the scene in order to voice Boer aspirations. The official

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Press had its doubts as to whether those gentlemen—Botha in particular—were entitled to act as representing the Boer section. The English in general, as well as those Boers who had fought on the British side, did not entertain any doubts whatsoever. Amid general and spontaneous approval the ex-Commandant-General became the figure round which his indigent compatriots grouped themselves, looking for light and leading.

In those days, following peace, everyone was doing his best to repair his damaged fortunes, either by hard work or by profiting from the inevitable, speculative conqueror's optimism. The revival of legitimate business and the liquidation of the military *régime*, which had lasted for three years, were accompanied by hectic anticipations of economic expansion in the new colonies. In the towns, as well as in the districts, land values rose enormously as the result of injudicious expectations of unprecedented prosperity. A numerous staff of highly paid officials was maintained for purposes of repatriation, compensation, and constabulary services. The new bureaucracy was extremely liberal; it knew of no economy. Imports assumed vast proportions, once communications and civil conditions were restored. Live-stock having been practically annihilated, and agriculture being disorganized, South Africa had to be satisfied with frozen beef from Australia and tinned foodstuffs from other countries. This undesirable state of affairs was intensified by a couple of years of serious drought, which delayed the return to normal of the country districts, and caused the scheme for wholesale settlement of immigrants to fail.

The Transvaal Programme.—The Transvaalers, as has been stated, were fortunate enough to possess energetic leaders. President Steyn could not return to the Free State until 1905. Willing enough, he was rendered unfit for the platform by physical weakness. General de Wet tells us concerning the post-war period: "I left politics severely alone. I quietly attended to my private business." That was until 1907, when responsible government came,

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and, with it, a portfolio for him. Political activity was not in the intrepid soldier's line. Other prominent Free Staters, too, remained inert for a long time. Botha, on the other hand, was backed by a small circle of sanguine, energetic supporters, among whom General Smuts soon became pre-eminent. Their programme was to save their people from the slough of material, moral, and national evils, aftermath of the war. They were advocating a *rapprochement* between Dutch and English, with a view to political and economic co-operation, and the unification of South Africa as an autonomous member of the Empire.

The war had taught Botha that the Boers, and even the entire population of South Africa, could hardly stand against a radical attempt by an overseas Power to take our country. He had felt the irresistible force of what General Sir Ian Hamilton had called the "gigantic system of fortifications, barriers, troops, and garrisons." He had sensed the native peril, too. He discovered the absolute necessity, for Boer and Briton, of unitedly ensuring their future existence. He also appreciated the invaluable advantage to a United South Africa of enjoying international safety as an autonomous part of the Empire. During the Great War, when the United States sent an expeditionary force of a million men to Europe, his conviction as to the vulnerability of his country was strengthened.

Originally his conciliation doctrine had the merely negative tendency to eliminate the old antipathy between Briton and Boer from our body politic. To-day no one can imagine how those two, before 1902, were facing one another. Such an unendurable tension could not last; it was bound to lead to the Kilkenny cat process; therefore both sections had to learn mutual understanding and toleration. It is not feasible to condense into a dozen words the meaning of 'conciliation,' as preached by Botha. Has anyone ever accurately limned General Hertzog's one-time 'two-stream' policy? Every thoughtful person has his own notion, which will probably be modified as

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years go on. An attempt to convey Botha's idea is made in the pages that follow. Instinctively the people felt the difference between the two policies. Gradually the urge for self-preservation conquered race feeling, that world-wide enigma. Botha's 'conciliation' came to be fully recognized in the practice of South African public life. The Union's status within the Empire, too, is being fairly generally appreciated nowadays.

Complaints and Protests.—The leaders who on January 8, 1903, officially met Chamberlain at Pretoria behaved correctly, but nevertheless ruffled the Colonial Secretary's temper. He had to listen to complaints about red tape, expense, and inefficiency of the repatriation department, and disappearance of the Dutch language from the schools. Protests were uttered against a further war loan of thirty million pounds for the Transvaal, which was to be taken up by the gold-mining companies. During the discussions, the Minister dropped a hint about "secret funds," supposed to have been in the hands of the Boer representatives in Europe, and considered suitable for the maintenance of widows and orphans. Botha just asked: "Is mention made in the peace terms of those funds?" Chamberlain had to admit, "Not in the least." That finished official interest in the matter once for all.

The Colonial Secretary did not show the slightest inclination to interfere with the administrative methods pursued by Lord Milner in his capacity as 'proconsul,' a word that was quite fashionable at the time. During his short stay at Johannesburg, Mr Chamberlain allowed himself to be persuaded that the supply of native labour for the gold-mines was inadequate; the mineowners were willing to underwrite a thirty million loan in exchange for the consent to the importation of Chinese labour. In these circumstances it became impossible for the Boer leaders to take any part in politics. Lord Milner, on behalf of Mr Chamberlain, politely invited Generals Botha, de la Rey, and Smuts early in February to join an advisory administrative Council. They declined, just as politely. The salary of £500

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per annum was a tempting one to them at the time, but verbally and in writing they stated their opinion to the effect that a nominated Council would produce more division and other evils than good results. Their letter said: "We are longing for a truce to political squabbling, and should like to see the establishment of a legislative council postponed." This advice found no echo at Johannesburg, where Lord Milner had chosen his domicile. A year later, on February 12, 1904, the body in question passed the ordinance for the importation of Asiatic labour, thus turning over a new leaf in the history of South Africa.

Lord Milner Promotes Agriculture.—The decision of the Boer leaders to refrain from entering politics unless they were elected by the public to do so fitted in with the concepts prevalent of old among that section of the people. The five persons who nominally represented the country districts in the Legislative Council had been appointed by Lord Milner. They neither enjoyed the confidence of their fellow-burghers nor any prestige with the Government. The fact that Botha and his friends were considered good enough to join an ornamental Council, but were excluded from a practical and economical administration of repatriation and compensation, speaks volumes for the inefficiency of Lord Milner's measures. He further stands condemned by his fiscal policy, which was based on the employment of the railways as a taxing machine. On one subject, however, Botha used to praise Lord Milner; that was because the latter did his best in order to grant State aid to agriculture on a large scale through experts, experimental farms, and agricultural colleges. Undoubtedly Lord Milner deserves recognition for all this, especially from the farming population.

Milner was the last of a long series of British colonial administrators belonging to a type that has now vanished. Of most of them not even the names are remembered in South Africa to-day. Those who have not been overtaken by oblivion owe the fact, with few exceptions, to their connexion with events that brought our sub-continent

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anything but joy. Botha was never able to forgive Lord Milner for having, by his intervention, drawn out the Boer war for more than a year over and above its inevitable length. The Boers, to Milner, remained an enigma till the last, but he lived long enough to see that the policy followed from 1907 onward suited all parties concerned, and that Botha had chosen the right road.

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XII

BOTHA'S FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

On his return from England, Botha not merely paid attention to matters political and to the private interests of numerous Transvaalers (he once gave an impoverished widow a hundred ewes, and on another occasion enabled a wounded burgher to go to a specialist in Europe), he also devoted himself energetically to repairing his own fortunes. The district of Vryheid, which saw him develop into a cattle farmer and a statesman, was taken from the Transvaal in 1902 in order to be added to Natal. Botha wished to remain identified with the Transvaal; he resolved to leave his ruined farm, Waterval (near Vryheid), unoccupied for the time being. Mrs Botha especially felt keenly the destruction of their homestead.

The family went to live on the farm Varkenspruit, Standerton, which was afterward christened 'Rusthof.' The three-years war had dealt Botha's financial position a hard knock. His general compensation claim, sent in to the Department, amounted to nearly £20,000. They awarded him £900. He returned the cheque just as it had reached him. His war losses consisted chiefly of movables: his ground was unassailable. He therefore could command sufficient credit to reorganize his ranching business. In May 1903 he acquired the transfer of approximately 1500 acres, being part of the farm Zandfontein, next to Varkenspruit. In January 1905 he bought another 2000 acres of the same property, and in April that year an additional 600 acres. The money had been borrowed. In 1906 he purchased 250 acres of Koppie Alleen, in 1911 another 400 acres of the same farm, and in 1912, 3500 acres of Springbokkuil. All of this was in the Standerton

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district, so that he now had disposal of ten thousand acres of first-class ranching ground. He had obtained it at very reasonable prices; at his death it figured at over £31,000 in his estate. According to Boer custom he was married in community.

Rusthof.—To the development of these assets he gave all his attention as well as his energy which, at any rate shortly after the war, was still undivided. The war-scarred homestead was repaired. The British collected the barbed wire, used by them for military purposes, and auctioned it in certain centres. Botha bought a large quantity at Standerton, and without delay fenced his farms, which were divided into paddocks. He took the trouble to ensure that only first-class live-stock should occupy them. As a sheep expert he was equalled by very few farmers, and what he did not know about a horse was hardly worth knowing.

One day he and I visited The Hague together; I took him to the Mauritshuis Art Gallery, where the famous Bull (by Potter) hangs. Botha circumstantially explained why he could not work up any enthusiasm for the seventeenth century steer—the artistic merits of the picture left him unmoved—and why it was that the Hollander of to-day bred a very much superior class of stock. It was interesting to listen to him. He was forever improving his herds, and before long his farms were being run at a profit. His wool acquired a good reputation at Durban, where he sent it annually to be sold. Having a railway station on the property, he was able to despatch milk and other farm produce to Johannesburg day by day. He planted trees and built dams. He and his wife became so attached to the place that they had a comfortable, large sandstone dwelling erected. Thereupon they called the estate 'Rusthof' (Haven of Rest). At Botha's death there were over 500 head of cattle, more than 3100 sheep, and 150 horses and mules. These were put down at £10,000; market values probably ranged higher.

The first couple of years after peace were extremely dry, and therefore bad for farming. For a time, Botha had to

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try some other way of maintaining his financial standing. In those days of tribulation most looked for salvation in hard work so as to mend their fortunes, and to set aside some reserve for contingencies. In addition to his farming activities Botha managed to turn to account his talent for calculation and his business insight, indulging his speculative bent. Shortly after 1902 the ex-Republics witnessed a boom, during which numerous people felt impelled to buy and sell. This created a demand for those who could bring purchasers and sellers together. Botha knew many people, and had his connexions everywhere. Once, while a Rustenburg farm was being sold by auction at Pretoria, he walked past, nodding to the auctioneer. He was told afterward that the farm had been knocked down to him. The same day he was able to sell at a profit. He made £2000 on the purchase and sale of Rietkol, Pretoria district. Another time he made a *coup* in connexion with a property that afterward became famous as the Kaalfontein diamond proposition. He tried, as an intermediary, to induce the former owner of the land on which the Premier Diamond Mine is situated to part with an adjoining piece of ground at a high price. In this particular case his efforts remained fruitless and led to financial failure.

This period of Botha's commercial doings benefited not only him personally but, indirectly, South Africa as well. A man with business 'luck' shows himself to be possessed of the enviable capacity of correctly diagnosing, calculating, and gauging conditions surrounding him. In South Africa prominent politicians who are at the same time good business men may be considered fairly rare. Some politicians are even helpless when it comes to looking after their private concerns. Botha's experience of men and things commercial would undoubtedly have made him rich had he concentrated on making money. The love he bore his people, and the great interest he took in national affairs, predominated with him, but his *flair* for political and diplomatic advantage was sharpened by his business acumen. Thus he felt exactly when South Africa was ripe

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for unification, and he knew to a nicety how to tackle the job. Better than his contemporaries he understood the ways of high politics. He was taught during those awkward years, after 1902, when he acted as a commission agent.

Bailey and Botha.—Before long his task as the organizer of a political party, and the leader of his people, occupied more and more of his time and attention. During a great part of the year he had to live in Pretoria. In 1904 he bought a fine house there. Mr (afterward Sir) Abe Bailey, who tided many Boers over their pecuniary difficulties, lent him the necessary money. Botha was soon able to repay him. They had had transactions together before, but some people thought fit to insinuate that the chairman of 'Het Volk' had become an instrument in the hands of pro-Chinese Mr Bailey, who was regarded by many as the Premier-designate of the Transvaal. During the general election of 1907 Sir Abe stood for Krugersdorp as an anti-Botha man, but the Het Volk candidate defeated him. In later years he served for a time as a follower of Botha.

Botha could not freely dispose of his time for long. Gradually national affairs claimed him entirely. He had to give up active farming, leaving the care of his estates to managers. In spite of all the cares that beset him, he never neglected the Standerton farm, however. During his visit to Europe in 1919 he and Mrs Botha simultaneously had a serious attack of influenza in London. I visited them, and asked what I could do for the patients. After a short conversation I wanted to take leave, but Botha first asked me to cable his Rusthof manager concerning veld fires and the sale of superfluous sheep. He was never slow to let his friends and neighbours profit by his thorough knowledge of farming. One day he remarked to me: "They may call me a soldier or a statesman—in reality I am a farmer, and nothing else."

Unification of South Africa increased the intensity with which he had to look after national interests. That is the

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reason why, during the years that followed it, he only purchased additional ground near Rusthof twice, in 1911 and 1912. His spare cash was invested in a few mortgages and in Union certificates. He demonstrated to his countrymen how farming, provided of course you know all about it, can be made to pay excellently. Always he would proclaim that to be a farmer is the most enviable thing in the wide world; the farmer is "monarch of all he surveys."

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XIII

BOTHA ON THE PLATFORM

SUPERFICIALLY viewed it did not seem very objectionable to import Chinese coolies for the mines. The natives had done well out of the war, and no longer felt the same need as before of working for the white man. Mines and farms were inconvenienced by the shortness of labour. The Witwatersrand disposed of hardly 70,000 mine natives. This was far below normal, and it was felt as a reproach that under the British flag the production of gold, and wealth generally, amounted to less than it had done in those unspeakable Kruger days! Chinese labour would not only increase the efficiency of mineral development, but prove a boon to the countryside because it would release cheaper and more abundant native labour. Petitions were hawked round the country districts for signatures in favour of the importation of Orientals.

As for Botha, he began to reflect more deeply, and to form other impressions. There was the experience of Natal with its indentured Indians, the experiment of forty years since, which had turned out so disastrously for South Africa. The presence of tens of thousands of unmarried Chinamen—unfathomable, with their peculiar customs, their special food, herded together in semi-confinement, and inclined to send their wages, to the tune of millions of pounds, abroad—boded great peril. The problem as to whether the country's own labour resources had been adequately tapped remained unsolved. Botha never made the mistake of under-estimating the gold industry's economic importance. At the most critical juncture of the war, when anti-magnate feeling was bitterest and the destruction of the mines was being clamoured for, he had protected

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them. National interests, however, were always paramount with him. That was where he differed from Lord Milner and the then leaders of the Rand mining industry, who allowed their fear of the unpleasant effects of a depression, even a temporary one, to outweigh all else. Outside the circle of interested financiers Chinese importation found few friends, even after the closing of a few gold-mines owing to the scarcity of Kaffirs. On the face of it, the coolies were to be used solely for unskilled work, but the white miners had their doubts.

The Heidelberg Meeting.—Shortly after Mr Chamberlain's departure, and following the formal announcement made by the mineowners to the effect that there was an insufficiency of native labour, the Government appointed an inquiry commission. Lord Milner took no notice of an anti-Chinese protest, voiced by Botha's first great meeting. This was held at Heidelberg on July 2, 1903, *i.e.*, a week before the appointment of the Commission. The meeting found that no case had been made out for the allegation as to a serious shortage of natives, and it resolved to ask the authorities not to import labour until the introduction of self-government.

This gathering, of which Botha duly notified Lord Milner in advance, was the first sign after peace of the stirring of public life, given by the Transvaal population in general, and the Boers in particular. Five hundred special constables were concentrated near the meeting-place. In the course of his optimistic speech Botha said: "The people should work like ants in building up the country, and regard it as an ant-heap for all those who, adopting it as their home, truly care for its welfare."

The principal Heidelberg resolutions asked for equal language rights, the postponement of Asiatic importation, and the putting off of any war loan until autonomy had been granted, at a period to be decided upon by the British Government. Lord Milner would have none of these things; this refers especially to the delay in importing Chinamen, for which the mineowners were so desperately

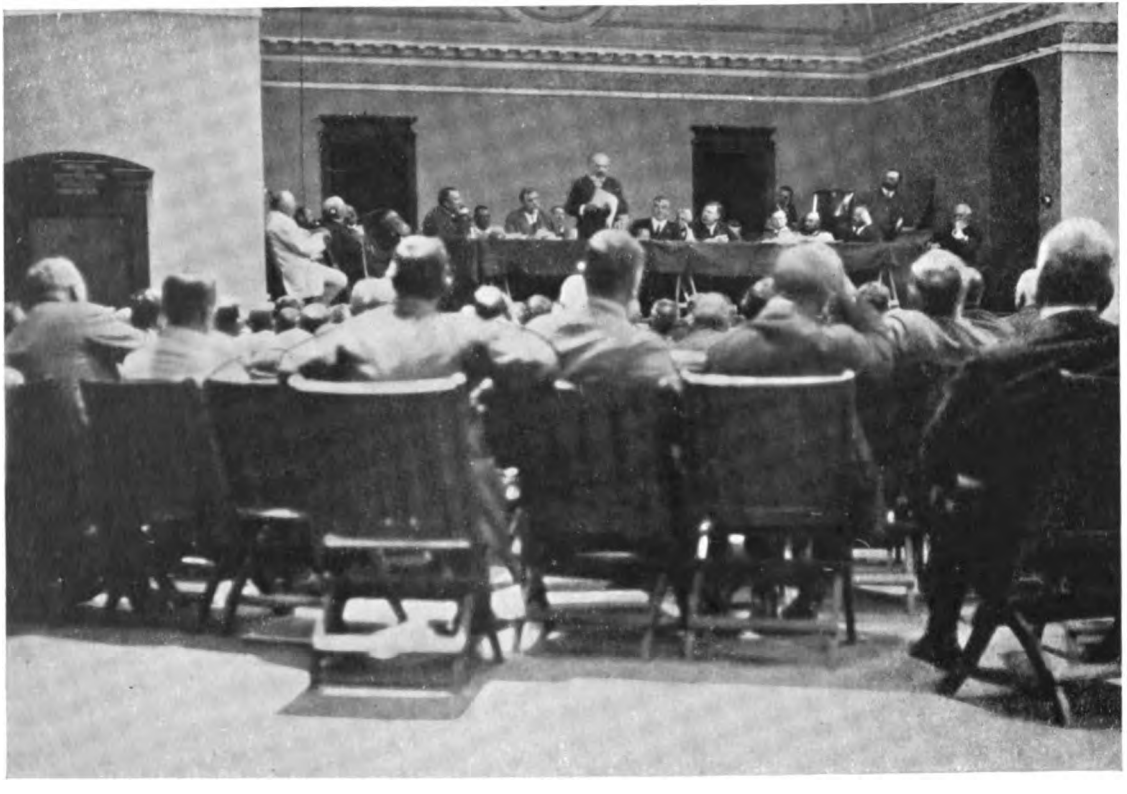
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anxious. The Commission proceeded with its labours, listening to Botha's statement on farm natives, but not allowing him to mention the word 'Chinese.' Within four months the report was ready—in favour of importation, but without unanimity among the members.

A "Political Dodge."—On February 12, 1904, the Legislative Council (of which Botha had a year previously refused membership) passed the Chinese Labour Ordinance. Two days earlier a protest had been cabled to the British Government by fifteen of the best-known Boer leaders; Lord Milner stigmatized the document as a "political dodge." It had been sent to the Rt. Hon. A. Lyttelton, Mr Chamberlain's successor at the Colonial Office, and took exception to the latter's pronouncement in the Commons as to the people of the Transvaal demanding Chinese workers; the public at large had never been asked for its views, and an overwhelming proportion of Boers were opposed to importation; the Commission was not an impartial body, nor did the Council represent the people; it would be a "fatal error" to import coolies, so the cable ran.

In June the first batch landed, and it was not long before 50,000 Chinamen were at work on the Rand. Except Botha and his fourteen 'backvelders' no one in South Africa had raised his voice at Westminster, where the arbiters of the Transvaal Crown Colony's fate in those days sat! Five days elapsed before South Africa received the answer to the protest; it proved a remarkably tactless one. It laid down that, in the absence of any stronger evidence than that contained in the cable, the Secretary of State was not in a position to recognize the claim of those who drafted it to be regarded as representing the bulk of the Boer population. Further, it was regretted that the protest had come too late. Lastly, the speeches and votes in favour on the part of the "Boer members" of the Council were quoted. In other words, Botha, de la Rey, Schalk Burger, and Smuts, together with the other authoritative signatories of the protest, were written down as insignificant interpreters of Boer opinion,

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A Party Congress

Party congresses are a regular feature of Transvaal politics. In this photograph General Botha is seen at the end of the table, to the right of the speaker.

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as against half a dozen obscure dummies with which Lord Milner had stuffed his Council! Since the ill-advised Kaiser telegram to Kruger during the Raid period, no such unfortunate message had reached Pretoria. The Lyttelton reply to the fifteen Boer leaders was an insult, inflicted not merely on themselves but on the 16,000 'Bitter-enders' and the even more numerous prisoners-of-war who had willy-nilly resigned themselves to the Vereeniging pact at the instance of those leaders.

Botha could not afford to swallow such a flagrant, and moreover incorrect, rejoinder. The moment had come for making it plain to Mr Lyttelton—as well as to Lord Milner—whose right, and whose duty, it was to act as the mouthpiece of Transvaal Boerdom. He resolved to exchange the private individual's status for that of the public man, and to organize without delay a political party, so that he might disseminate his views from the public platform. Toward the end of March 1904 he addressed a meeting at Krugersdorp. Early in April he told some sixty local leaders at Heidelberg that the moment had arrived for the people to become articulate.

The reports of several High Veld meetings, addressed by Botha, appeared in the newspapers. At the end of April there was a big gathering at Fordsburg, under the battlements of Lord Milner's Johannesburg fortress, where Botha did his best to dispel the fears of those who suspected him of wanting to foment revolution. He praised Natal for the "fine, manly" amnesty to rebels, and expressed the hope that Sir Starr Jameson, as Cape Premier, would likewise pardon those rebels who were still sheltering in the Transvaal. As had happened at the other meetings, delegates were elected at Fordsburg to a congress to be held shortly. This unexpected activity made English people nervous and noisy. They took fright at the thorough manner in which the Dutch were replying to the Government's careless challenge. Within three months an effective party organization had sprung from the soil. It was the first to arise in the ex-Republics.

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'*Het Volk*.'—So it came about that on May 23, 1904, in the *Volkstem* Buildings, Pretoria, a congress was presided over by Botha at which a couple of hundred delegates established 'Het Volk' (The People). This political body remained, for the space of some seven years, a wholesome, progressive factor in South Africa's affairs.

The Chairman's opening speech referred to the ravages of East Coast fever among cattle; it asked for the support of war widows; it opposed Chinese labour, demanded the postponement of amending gold and diamond legislation, condemned the proposed loan of thirty millions, criticized defective educational conditions, and demonstrated that the Boers at least were ripe for responsible government. The discussions lasted three days. Botha recommended his hearers to forgive the 'National Scouts,' while he offered his English-speaking countrymen the hand of fellowship—an act to which many a delegate present, as well as numerous people outside, felt unable to give spontaneous approval.

The congress over, members walked in solemn procession to the Governor's offices, in order to lay the resolutions adopted before his Excellency. Amazed, the townspeople looked on while the determined backwoodsmen marched to their destination. Four abreast, they followed their former Commandant-General, who had now become their recognized political chief. A demonstration of this kind was on the verge of impertinence! The pro-Milner press showed its impatience. How dared the conquered, who were subsisting on charity, talk so frankly, being (in the but recently pacified Crown Colony) the first to establish a political organization!

Before adjourning, the congress had cabled greetings to Switzerland, where Paul Kruger was spending his last days. An impressive reply, containing best wishes, was received from the aged national hero. Just a few weeks later, far from the land of his birth, he was gathered to his fathers.

Henceforth it was a matter of some difficulty to challenge

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Botha's position as a representative politician. When on July 15 a Botha letter to Lord Courtney appeared in the London *Times*, conveying the information that "Repatriation was a complete and melancholy failure," no one either in South Africa or England was able to ask: What does the fellow think of himself that he should be worrying us with his opinions!

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XIV

BOTHA AS A PARTY LEADER

In its short life Het Volk fully deserved the undisguised admiration of its opponents as "the best-organized party in the world." The whole of the rural population looked up to Botha as a guide, philosopher, and friend. His assistance and advice were in demand on all sides. Those in trouble—and their name was legion—simply informed Louis Botha. His authority was undisputed; his suggestions were promptly acted upon. He excelled by the moderation of his language as well as of his actions. Outside the Transvaal, too, people began to take notice of him. South Africa, bit by bit, discovered its new leader.

When Botha used the trains in order to reach a meeting-place, it so happened that there was often some hitch in the railway service—public means of communication were then, as now, under Government control. This made him resolve to utilize the motor-car—a vehicle that had become useful for long trips—in order to visit the districts, and personally help to organize the Het Volk party, inspire the people with courage, and urge them to co-operation.

Commandant Jozua Joubert.—The National Scouts soon lost their identity as a distinct social, ecclesiastical, and political element. It had been expected that the rift between Bitter-enders and others would become permanent among the Dutch, but within a few years the nation had closed its ranks. The case of Commandant Jozua Joubert had left a deep impression on the public mind. Originally a High Veld sheep farmer, he could point to a long and honourable military career. Wounded in the first War of Independence, he had served against Mapoch, Jameson, and Magato. During the Boer war he commanded his

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burghers at Dundee and Colenso. Here he was once more wounded, but toward the end of May 1900 he was able to resume his command. A year later, his arm was shot off by another Boer, near Amersfoort. His horse had suffered so severely that he did his best to proceed on foot. His A.D.C. helped him to reach a field hospital, where he was taken prisoner after the lapse of a month. His arm was then amputated.

After peace he returned to his district, where he visited the man who, in the enemy's service, had fired on him and his people. The disabled commandant indicated that he wanted to become reconciled to his late opponents, in order to live together as neighbours should.

When a man of extraordinary valour showed brotherliness and self-control in such exemplary manner, others could not possibly perpetuate hatred. Wherever he could, Botha publicly proved that he was not vindictive, even though, during the Middelburg interview with Lord Kitchener in 1901, he had launched out violently against those burghers who had proved unfaithful. Botha did not explain this systematic mildness on the grounds of high ideals or Christian ethics; his argument, and it proved irresistible, was that enduring division between Bitter-enders and others would seriously jeopardize the chances of both in looking for political and economic reconstruction.

When, at the foundation of Het Volk, he preached his doctrine of reconciliation, it was just as if he talked to deaf ears—so deep-rooted was the resentment felt toward the National Scouts. Botha's logic, however, was so convincing, and the other section welcomed it so readily, that the breach was healed within a couple of years. In the course of his peroration at the first Het Volk Congress he said:

"Let us put back the past so far that it no longer has any power to keep us apart. Less than a year ago we were in opposite camps—men of the same house passed each other without a handshake. To-night we are gathered in order to consider the fortunes of one and all. So mote it be!

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Let us do all we can to heal the breach, then we shall again become great. Let the names of 'Handsupper' and 'National Scout' be excised from our vocabulary. The honour of the people is a thing too great and delicate to be tarnished by such stains."

Once he remarked to a friend: "Treat National Scouts exactly like blind sheep." Sheep that are born blind are often cured by the application of a caustic fluid that removes the obstructing film, and so restores sight.

National Education and "Secret Funds."—There was another extremely important subject that claimed the careful attention of the Boers. All school buildings, even those which had belonged to school committees, were converted holus-bolus by Lord Milner into Crown property. The Dutch language was bundled out of the schools. The Boers, very much dissatisfied, resolved to have their own organization, which became known as "Christian National Education" (Dutch abbreviation: C.N.O.). In order to ensure its success the leaders called on pre-war teachers. The idea proved highly successful. Flourishing C.N.O. schools arose in all the country districts of the Transvaal. Local supporters were enthusiastically helpful. Cordial co-operation was lent by Dr Leyds, who had been for years State Secretary during the Kruger *régime*.

Until the peace of Vereeniging he had acted as the Republic's plenipotentiary at Brussels; his unchanging devotion to the Boer cause, coupled with his absolute dependability, gained him the high esteem of the Boer leaders. The administration of certain funds that had been the property of the South African Republic Government had been entrusted to him. It is wrong to refer to these funds as the "Kruger millions," which are supposed to have been sent to Europe after the outbreak of war or, alternatively, to have been taken away in Kruger's portmanteau. The President neither took any money with him nor received anything subsequently. What had happened was that, on the outbreak of hostilities, the Republic kept a banking-account in Europe, from which sundry expenditure

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DESIGN FOR A STAINED-GLASS WINDOW

A cartoon by A. W. Lloyd in the Johannesburg *Sunday Times* (1907)

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was being defrayed. When in 1900 the two Presidents at Pretoria conferred on urgent matters, it was agreed that, if the oversea funds belonging to the Transvaal survived the war, any balance would be used on behalf of education as well as widows and orphans. At that time the Free State had received £800,000 (partly in gold, partly in notes) from the Transvaal Exchequer on account of its war expenditure.

During the war part of the money was sent back to South Africa by couriers. It is probable that some of the amounts thus forwarded did not reach their destination. Another part was used to keep the pro-Boer propaganda going, under Dr Leyds' energetic and able management. It served the purpose of instilling into the mind of Britain the necessity for a peace that would be an honourable one to the Boers, and thus help to recover for England its damaged prestige.

Yet another part of the money was spent on clothing and munitions, skilfully smuggled through to the commandos. Further, expenses for travelling and maintenance had to be met in connexion with several South Africans who came to Europe, such as President Kruger and staff, the delegates Fischer, C. Wessels, and A. D. W. Wolmarans, Mrs Botha, Mrs Reitz, and, afterward, President Steyn—not to mention hundreds of others. When peace came, the money was not exhausted, and there was also a special fund in aid of the Boers, to the credit of which Dr Leyds placed all contributions, sent him from every quarter of the globe in support of the Boer people. It is now a couple of years since this fund was finally wound up and liquidated. During peace negotiations the sums in question were never referred to. During Botha's first visit to Europe he at first contemplated having them shifted to Pretoria, for the new Government to administer. This scheme, inspired by a fleeting idea of 'doing the big thing,' was soon abandoned.

When Chamberlain alluded to the funds, Botha showed no interest in the matter; still less would he assume responsibility. He pointed out to Chamberlain that the Treaty did

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not mention the money, so that no obligation rested on him. Many people have been unable to shed their illusions regarding the "Kruger millions," preferring to adhere to an unjustifiable faith in their number and inexhaustibility. During the 1915 general election political passion rose very high among Afrikanders, and Botha was reluctantly compelled to take legal proceedings against an excitable politician who suggested that the Commandant-General had made some improper use of the "millions." It would be superfluous to emphasize that Dr Leyds, as trustee, has throughout administered the funds in the most punctilious manner. Steps have been taken in order to ensure that future historians shall have access to full information on the subject.

Paul Kruger's Funeral.—It was a matter of intense satisfaction to Botha that the solemn obsequies of President Kruger proved to be one of the most impressive national ceremonies ever witnessed by South Africa. On December 16, 1904, the funeral took place at Pretoria. Botha had accompanied the body on its train journey from Capetown. At all stations along the route of over a thousand miles people came in their numbers in order to render the last honours to the funeral cortège. Botha was the heart and soul of the committee in charge of the ceremonies. His tactfulness had led to fine co-operation with the authorities. The English section showed its sympathy and respect when the mortal remains of the great Afrikander were laid to rest in his native soil, amid demonstrations of deepest homage.

The majority of the principal Boer leaders came to Pretoria for the occasion. On the day after the funeral the most prominent among them took advantage of the opportunity to express to Lord Milner their desire that no change should be made in the government, until such time as full autonomy could be granted. All in vain! On March 31, 1905, Letters Patent, instituting a travesty of 'representative' government for the Transvaal, were issued in London. The Free State had to put up with a continuation of its Crown Colony *régime*.

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XV

BOTHA AND CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN

DURING the first six months of Chinese labour on the Rand the public had no cause for complaint. Early in 1905, however, deserters murdered a certain Mr Joubert. A series of crimes of a like nature followed. Protest meetings were held in the country districts, which were overrun by the Chinamen. Deputations were sent to the authorities—all in vain. The Cape enacted a law excluding the Chinese.

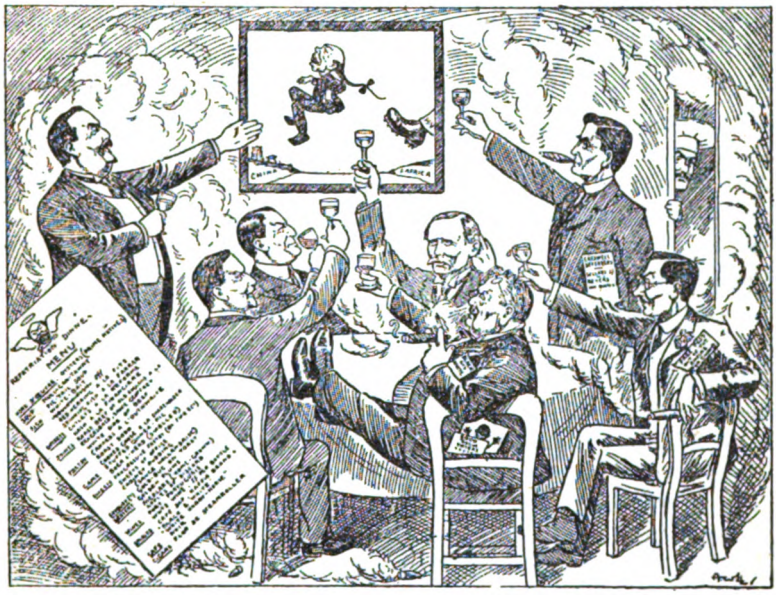
The situation developed in such a serious manner that English party politics became involved, the Imperial Government constituting itself the strenuous defender of the coolie system. On March 31, 1905 the Lyttelton Constitution, granting 'representative' government to the Transvaal, was promulgated. An elected council, without the right of financial initiative, could legislate subject to veto by Downing Street's 'royal pleasure.' In April Lord Milner left.

In May, Generals Botha, Smuts, and Beyers bearded the lion in its den. At the Wanderers, Johannesburg, they addressed a mass meeting in opposition to the Lyttelton Constitution. Their main argument was that constant friction would be unavoidable in an elected assembly supposed to control a nominated executive. Before the Boer War it would have been hopeless for one of their kind to try to hold such a meeting on the Rand, let alone expect to find sympathy, but times had changed; the mining magnates were put to it to defend their former popularity.

Strong insinuations against the loyalty of anyone who ventured to shake hands politically with the Boers were made. Years were destined to pass before the seed of

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conciliation led to the harvest anticipated. Nevertheless, Botha found support among prominent Johannesburgers, who founded the Responsible Government Association. They co-operated with Het Volk against the Lyttelton scheme, disappointed as they were with the results of Milner administration. The pro-Chinese had established the



THE ANTI-CHINESE CELEBRATING

A cartoon by A. W. Lloyd in the Johannesburg *Sunday Times* (1907)

Progressive Party. With a degree of disgust that was by no means unintelligible they contended that it would be madness to enable the Boers to regain through the ballot-box what they had lost by the rifle, after England's sacrifice of 30,000 lives and £250,000,000.

Party strife waxed furious, but Botha knew how to preserve a well-advised calm. He saw to it that the skirmishing fell chiefly to the lot of the 'Responsibles.' The English-speaking section could easily be forgiven for suspecting his increasing influence, yet it was never his

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intention at the time that Het Volk should supply a Government immediately the 'responsible' constitution he advocated came into being.

Toward the end of 1905 the Chinese furore dominated election platforms in Great Britain. The result was a smashing blow to the pro-Chinese—for the last time the United Kingdom actively intervened in South Africa's vital concerns. It was realized, as never before, that South Africa was a hornet's nest that should be left very much to itself! The man in the street was getting tired of his responsibility for the sphinx-like country of Kruger and Rhodes. It was a cold *douche* to him to notice that the complexion of the British Government had come to depend on the category of labour that was or was not held desirable for an uninteresting expanse of gold reef in the unsympathetic Transvaal.

After the Liberal victory Botha induced General Smuts to pay a 'private' visit to London. General Smuts soon got busy, without any particularly friendly reception in Fleet Street. The new Government had not yet had time to familiarize itself with details of administration. General Smuts interviewed prominent statesmen, and left a memorandum with the Colonial Office, embodying Botha's views. "Let it be clearly understood," it stated, "once for all that the Boers and their leaders do not wish to raise the question of the annexation of the new colonies or the British flag. They accept accomplished facts," and therefore wished to take part in responsible government.

For the Orange Free State, too, General Smuts demanded the "freest and best constitution," at a time when the Free Staters themselves somehow had not found occasion openly to register their wishes. In March 1906 General Smuts and General Botha visited the late President Steyn. London matters were discussed, and it was not long before political activity was organized in the Free State as well. The President in May made his first public appearance since 1902; the Orangia Unie was established at Bloemfontein two years after Het Volk was founded. Shortly

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afterward, Botha was blamed in the Free State because the Transvaal was a few months ahead in obtaining self-government.

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, the new British Premier, never hesitated for a moment in regard to his Transvaal policy, which had made the Liberals victorious. As far back as March 2, 1901 (just after the Kitchener-Botha meeting at Middelburg), he had made his Oxford speech against any halfway-house *régime*. On February 8, 1906, he strongly appealed to his Cabinet to entrust to Boer and Briton jointly the fate of their common country. Five days later it was formally resolved to abrogate the Lyttelton Constitution and to send out a Royal Commission of Inquiry. In May the Commission started its work at Pretoria.

Autonomy was to be granted the two annexed States within five years of Vereeniging! Kitchener's hint to General Smuts during the Vereeniging peace negotiations about Liberal potentialities proved to have been an honourable and correct one. Often I have heard Botha discuss Campbell-Bannerman; always he showed the sincerest esteem and appreciation of his unique and honest statesmanship. John Bull, it is true, had grown tired of South Africa. This, however, could not derogate from the merits of the statesman who had found—and dared to use—the key for a permanent understanding between the two countries.

At Campbell-Bannerman's death in 1908 Botha cabled: "Have learnt with deepest sorrow of the passing of C. B., in whom the Empire loses one of its wisest statesmen and the Transvaal one of the truest friends. In securing self-government for the new colonies, he not only raised an imperishable monument to himself, but through the policy of trust he inspired the people of South Africa with a new feeling of hopefulness and co-operation. In making it possible for the two races to live and work together harmoniously, he has laid the foundation of a united South Africa."

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Lord Morley, in his reminiscences, relates that Botha during his 1909 stay in London gave a banquet to Ministers. There were no speeches; toasts were confined to two: the King, and, in Botha's words, "To the memory of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman." On this note of simplicity, Morley observes, ended a long period of stress and storm, in which both Campbell-Bannerman and Botha had worthily taken their parts.

Botha was not very trustful toward the Royal Commission; he brought General Smuts as an interpreter to his meetings with its members. Smuts was not enthusiastic either. On May 15, 1906, he wrote to the late Mr Merriman, then leader of the Cape Opposition:

> They are well meaning, but weak, and I at any rate expect very little from them. The unexpected sometimes happens, so I shall not despair. They do not take evidence, but have confidential conversations, so as to get at the inwardness of the situation. We are fighting a big fight, and must bring every bit of reserve into the field.

A few days later he wrote: "We do not wish for political power. But when I look at the dark prospect, I could almost wish to have despotic power." These were references to the Chinese imbroglio. On June 22 he complained to Merriman that the Commission contemplated excessive Witwatersrand representation.

President Steyn, too, was pessimistic. Early in May he wrote to Merriman: "I do not expect much from them. How they will be able to understand in three months' time our complex situation I do not know."

The "vote British" circles, of course, got busy. Sir Abe Bailey and Sir Percy Fitzpatrick went to England, looking for support for a scheme that was to assure them a Parliamentary majority. English experts advised adopting the Cape franchise for non-whites.

Yet the unexpected did happen—an acceptable constitution was produced. The only ground for criticism was the nomination by the Governor of members of the Upper House. The British Parliament confirmed the Letters

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Patent without a division, and in December 1906 they were promulgated.

The Free State obtained its constitution in June 1907. A lot of dust was raised, however, before matters were finally settled. Lord Milner made his maiden speech in the Lords, violently condemning the Government's proposals as mischievous. Mr Balfour made a rumpus in the Commons. "An audacious experiment," was his term. "There is nothing," he argued, "to prevent the Transvaal making every preparation, constitutionally, quietly, without external interference, for a new war."

On their part, the advocates of autonomy—*e.g.*, Mr Churchill, who had joined the Cabinet—strongly criticized Lord Milner's deeds in South Africa. Even the King took sides in an issue that moved the whole of the United Kingdom. From Marienbad, the Bohemian watering-place, King Edward wrote to Churchill:

> It would be deplorable to run the risk of having another war in South Africa, or of losing the colony, where we have spent so much blood and money. . . . As long as you are careful to maintain British supremacy you may rest assured that any measure the Government may take for the welfare of South Africa will receive His Majesty's approval.

Naturally, the slightest *faux pas* by the Boer leaders would have intensified the difficulties in the way of the Liberal Government. At the same time, Botha and Smuts were hard put to it to induce the farmers not to take the law into their own hands against the Chinese marauders, who were terrorizing the countryside.

Ten years afterward General Smuts acted as a member of the War Cabinet in London. On April 2, 1917, he said in a speech:

> The Boer war was supplemented, complemented, or compensated by one of the wisest political settlements ever made in the history of the English nation. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was an Empire builder. He was not either intellectually or politically a superman, but he was a wise man with profound political instinct.

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Lord Shaw mentions in his *Letters to Isabel* how Botha during the 1907 Imperial Conference described a recent meeting with Balfour.

> BALFOUR: Well, Botha, you have done it; yet you have got your constitution. What will come of it?
> BOTHA: I believe that in five years I shall return to this country to ask for the confederation of South Africa.
> BALFOUR: No! This thing is impossible, incredible!
> BOTHA: We shall see.

In considerably less than five years he was back. On this occasion Balfour said, "Well, General Botha, this is extraordinary. You have done it again; you have got confederation."

Botha answered, "Mr Balfour, will you wash your hands of that?"

"Not very likely," Mr Balfour replied.

Ten years later the two often met at the Paris Peace Conference. Repeatedly I was privileged to witness the pleasant behaviour of the aged British statesman toward the Union's Premier. South Africa had shown itself worthy of the "audacious experiment." Botha had made a great success of it—but at the expense of what personal sacrifice, distress, and exertion!

The Parties in 1906.—The Royal Commission of 1906 had to devote its attention chiefly to delimitation. Each of the four parties, Het Volk, the Responsibles, the Progressives, and Labour, was after its own advantage. The principal bone of contention was the proportion between the number of seats to be allotted to the Rand-*cum*-Pretoria on the one hand, and the country districts on the other. The complexion of many a constituency was in the highest degree problematical, and everyone wanted to guard against election disappointments.

Botha's tactics continued in the direction of giving great prominence to his English-speaking 'Responsible' allies. This was consistent, because he never dreamt of posing as the champion of a redivivus of the pre-war Boer *régime*. It

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was frankly agreed that an anti-Chinese victory at the polls would mean the Premiership of the late Sir Richard Solomon, then Lieut.-Governor. He was not a strong



HISTORY DEFEATS ITSELF

SHADE OF PAUL KRÜGER: "What! Botha *Premier*? Well, these English *do* 'stagger humanity'!"

Reproduced by permission of the Proprietors of "Punch"

man. Originally he had been pro-Chinese, but he became one of the leaders of the 'Responsibles,' and had the merit of having been given gubernatorial dignity by the Conservatives!

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The Assembly elections of March 1907 provided a sensation. Het Volk won thirty-seven out of sixty-seven seats, and therefore had an absolute majority. The Pro-



THE TRANSVAAL ELECTION OF 1907
A cartoon by A. W. Lloyd in the Johannesburg *Sunday Times*

gressives managed to get twenty-one, the 'Responsibles' six, and Labour three.

The first 'Senate' was appointed by Lord Selborne, the Governor. He hastened to bestow the majority on the Progressives, who had not even been able to obtain one-third of the seats in the elective body!

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XVI

BOTHA AS TRANSVAAL PREMIER

THE Het Volk victory showed that Botha's conciliation propaganda, and especially his denunciation of the importation of Chinamen as "a crime," had made a deep impression. This applies to a number of English-speaking electors as well, although these had been told by the Progressive Party that their duty was to "vote British." Often it was thrown in his face that he should have preached conciliation to the English, rather than worry his own people. Concrete results in 1907, however, proved that he and General Smuts had not pleaded, everywhere and at all times, in vain. Het Volk attracted to its banners several English-speaking candidates, and some of them were elected. Many English-speaking voters, on their part, gave their support to either 'Responsibles' or Het Volkers. Years had to pass before racialism was to vanish from South African party politics, but the success of the initial effort was encouraging.

Botha's ideals, in effect, began to take root. In order to give expression to the public gratitude for Botha's considerable share in the victory at the polls, *The Volkstem*, shortly after the elections, organized a collection for the purpose of making a presentation. General Smuts, for the occasion, wrote to the editor:

> I agree that no one more than General Botha is entitled to gratitude and recognition. The victory of the people's party at the polls is chiefly due to his never-flagging endeavours, which began on the day when peace was proclaimed, in the cause of welding the inhabitants of the Transvaal into a compact, lasting organization; to his common sense and well-considered counsel; to his moderate policy and his work for cordial racial co-operation. These outstanding merits deserve worthy acknowledgment.

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Sir Richard Solomon, having been nominated as a candidate against the Progressives in a Pretoria constituency, resigned his appointment as Lieut.-Governor. Though regarded as a potential premier, he was not the man to call forth great enthusiasm. His official work had been very fruitful. In August 1906 General Smuts wrote of him to Mr Merriman: "As he is weak, wise and strong colleagues, if such there be, will mould him." And, in December: "We shall be prepared to work with Sir R. S., if he is sound on fundamentals, and recants the Chinese heresy; but his position will be difficult, anomalous and unhappy." A few weeks later, President Steyn wrote to Mr Merriman: "I do not understand Het Volk supporting a man like Sir R. S., a pro-Chinese, a Milnerite, a man who did not scruple to share in the spoils of a war which he condemned."

That even a man like President Steyn found difficulty in understanding conditions in the adjoining province is striking. Het Volk was concerned, first, with delivering South Africa from the political domination of the gold magnates, and with getting rid of the Chinese. In addition, it was in the interests of South Africa to have a Het Volk victory assisted by removing, in anticipation, any semblance of a defiant, anti-British triumph. In the absence of a more acceptable personage, the provisional choice of a prime minister had to fall on Sir R. Solomon—in spite of his assailable past as a politician—instead of on Botha or Smuts; mention of either of whom might perhaps have caused a stampede.

Botha never was ambitious enough to earmark the premiership as something he would be perfectly entitled to claim. Had circumstances permitted it, he would have been satisfied to leave the helm of State in the hands of General Smuts, Mr F. S. Malan, and other worthy leaders, contenting himself with a minor part. The work of a parliamentarian never appealed to him—rather was it the other way about.

Sir Richard Solomon had over-estimated his chances. He was defeated at the polls, and the question arose whether

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Het Volk was called upon to give him a safe seat in the Assembly, as a preliminary to the premiership. The Het Volk victory, however, was so decisive in favour of Botha and Smuts that there was no longer any good reason why anyone else's premiership should have been considered. Without an opportunity of consulting leaders, *The Volkstem*, which was their party organ, on its own responsibility advised the defeated candidate to leave politics, and not to allow his friends to force him.

The hint was taken. On March 4, 1907, the Botha Cabinet was sworn by Lord Selborne, the Governor, as something unavoidable and a matter of course. It was scarcely five years since the death-knell of the Republics had sounded. Botha on that occasion had urged his distracted comrades to preserve their faith in the future, and to avoid national suicide. Now the ex-Commandant-General of the Republic was the responsible head of the Transvaal Government; the system that had made Lord Milner possible had finally gone.

Smuts Stands Back.—There was, however, a third person whose name had been mentioned in connexion with the premiership, viz., General Smuts, whose virtues as a platform speaker and unmistakable statecraft were much admired. Nevertheless, he was not a candidate. On the day when he was sworn as Colonial Secretary and Minister of Education, he wrote to Merriman:

> I might have been Premier, but considered that it would be a mistake to take precedence over Botha, who is really one of the first men South Africa has ever produced. If he had culture, as he has chivalry and common sense, there would not be his equal in South Africa. The varsity boys in his team will help him most loyally, and I hope that events will justify the arrangement of the Cabinet. . . . None of us have any parliamentary experience, and we are horribly afraid.

Three years later, Merriman imagined that he himself was entitled to the reversion of the Union premiership, and he refused a portfolio in the Botha Cabinet.

The 'Responsibles.'—Although the 'Responsibles' numbered barely half a dozen in the Assembly, Botha took

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their leader into his ministry. They soon amalgamated with Het Volk. Immediately after the victory, General Smuts wrote to Merriman: "I am exceedingly anxious not to have a pure Het Volk ministry. On a policy of racial peace we carried many English constituencies with us, and I wish we should continue that policy night and day."

In spite of the suspicion with which Botha's policy of conciliation was regarded by a large section of the British, the Government's prestige was not long in finding a firm foundation, both in the Transvaal and abroad. Johannesburg prognostications of irretrievable ruin for the share market in case Het Volk gained the day turned out to be incorrect. The new rulers keenly realized that world economics depended very largely on Pretoria sympathy toward the Transvaal gold industry. Pretoria, for all its anti-Chinese proclivities, had common sense and forethought.

Before he had found time to familiarize himself with his official duties, Botha was summoned to London, where he had to attend an Imperial Conference. Before leaving he was only just able to attend the opening of Parliament at Pretoria by Lord Selborne, on March 21, 1907. In the Speech, Lord Selborne announced that "My Ministers have decided that the employment of Chinese labour by the Witwatersrand mines must cease at the earliest possible moment."

Lord Selborne was not among those who rejoiced at the turn of events. In those days of excitement—in England as well as in South Africa—he gave the following portrait of Botha in a private letter to King Edward:

> A born leader of men, with plenty of moral courage, a man of natural dignity of manner and reserve, who does not wear his heart on his sleeve, and will not go enthusing with English Radicals, whom, being a great Tory by nature (as all Boers are), he will probably dislike.

The reference to Botha's relation to the situation of parties in Great Britain is characteristic, and proves the far-reaching influence he wielded, even in those days.

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XVII

BOTHA AND THE 1907 IMPERIAL CONFERENCE

It is no secret to-day that those who were called upon to take part in Imperial Conferences a quarter of a century ago did not attach quite the same importance to them as did the people in general, who were chiefly impressed by the pomp which surrounded them. The Colonial Office used to feel flattered at being, for a couple of weeks, say, the centre of attention of the British—and perhaps of a wider—world. The fact of the deliberations not being public whetted people's curiosity; and from a sentimental standpoint the Conferences were undoubtedly valuable. As the 1907 Conference immediately succeeded Botha's installation as Transvaal premier he might easily have excused himself. The Empire, one might think, would not have suffered merely because its latest baby was not represented at the discussions in the Metropolis. Botha, however, considered it advisable to go.

On his arrival in England he was at once made the hero of the hour; nor was he backward in showing his gratification at the turn events had taken. Less than five years ago he had come as a suppliant, and stayed at a small, out-of-the-way hotel; now he was the British Government's honoured guest as the peer of the most prominent statesmen in the Empire. The Liberal Government felt pleased at Botha's presence, because it made the ordinary citizen respect Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman's wise policy of trusting the Boers.

Immediately the ease with which Botha moved among the highest official and social circles drew attention. In this he was assisted by his remarkable memory for faces and names. During the Boer War he used to visit the

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wounded burghers and prisoners for a chat, after a fight had taken place. Years afterward a dinner was given him in a Free State township; when it was over mine host inquired whether he had enjoyed the affair. Botha at once recognized him as one of those wounded prisoners-of-war, correctly recalling all the facts in connexion with the incident. Dr Bok relates that once, at his office, a man asked for an interview with the Premier. The visitor was extremely genial, and even cordial; the private secretary could not place him, but did not dare to ask his name, and allowed him to enter Botha's room without an introduction. After the interview, the Premier said: "Has it escaped your memory that, four years ago, in such-and-such a district, our car broke down, and this man took us into town?" Botha remembered his name and that of his farm, colour of his horses, and other details.

Botha's motive in leaving Pretoria immediately after his appointment as Prime Minister cannot be better set out than was done in a letter from President Steyn to Merriman, dated on the day after the Conference opened, *i.e.*, April 16, 1907. Steyn wrote:

> With you I agree that it would be better if Botha did not lay the loyalty butter on so very thick; I daresay he is afraid to be misjudged. I am sorry he went to London. No good will come out of it for us. He told me he is only going to listen, and will not bind us to anything. Still I am sorry he went. He consulted me, and I told him that I consider that there are many reasons for him not to go, but he must in this matter allow himself to be governed by the decision of his colleagues. In justice to him I must say that he was most anxious to go. Their main object to let him go is to get money for a land bank. Will they get it? I wonder.

This pessimism proved unjustified. Botha returned to his Colony with the promise of £5,000,000 by way of a loan, capital and interest to be guaranteed by the British Government. In other ways, too, Steyn incorrectly predicted that "no good would come out of it for us," for the visit to London greatly facilitated the unification that followed not long after.

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Laurier and Botha.—It is not necessary to dwell on the Conference itself. Lord Elgin, who, as Colonial Secretary, presided, was rusted fast in the groove of a routine of antiquated 'colonial' policy, having but faint idea of the aspirations of the autonomous oversea states. Deakin of Australia, on the other hand, was the protagonist of an



BOTHA'S RETURN FROM THE CONFERENCE
(General Smuts, H. C. Hull, Johann Rissik, J. de Villiers, and E. P. Solomon)
A cartoon by A. W. Lloyd in the Johannesburg *Sunday Times*

imperialism that meant the freedom and equality of all the Dominions—a term dating from this particular Conference. At the same time, he wanted them to undertake clearly formulated obligations, arising from joint responsibility for Imperial interests. Dr Jameson, the Cape Premier, endorsed the Australian view. Between Lord Elgin and Deakin stood Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who insisted on Crown authority, but refused to countenance the abandonment of

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even the slightest Dominion autonomous rights. He preferred a "union of hearts" to any system of preference or military subsidies. The ardent Australian dubbed the sober Canadian "anti-imperialist." Botha during the debates consistently supported Laurier, keeping his promise to Steyn not to commit South Africa in any way.

On one point Botha and Jameson together opposed Deakin, who wanted an Imperial Court of Appeal. The former two pleaded for a combined South African Supreme Court as a precursor to unification. Botha and Jameson had never met before. Their present contact led to a measure of mutual consideration and understanding of each other's intentions from which shortly many benefits for South Africa were destined to flow.

Selborne and Swaziland.—During his stay in London Botha did his utmost to obtain a retrocession of Swaziland on behalf of the successors to the South African Republic (of which the territory had been a protectorate). On several occasions he made strong representations to the Colonial Office on the subject, but without avail. Lord Selborne, who was High Commissioner for South Africa, considered a semi-independent status, on the Basutoland model, the most suitable for Swaziland. In this he was supported by Liberal negrophilists. In the Transvaal Parliament no unanimity was obtainable, the Opposition refusing to support the Government on this point; and so Botha realized the uselessness of bringing further pressure to bear. It appears, by the way, that Lord Selborne did not oppose the prospect of all native protectorates eventually being transferred to a United South Africa.

During his stay, which lasted barely a couple of weeks, Botha kept in touch with the representatives of the gold-mining interest. He undertook not to repatriate a single Chinaman without replacement by a native labourer—beyond that he refused to commit himself. In Fleet Street they made it known that he had evaded the financiers as cleverly as he had formerly kept out of Lord Kitchener's meshes. Shortly before his return home, he—together

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with Sir Starr Jameson, Sir Joseph Ward (New Zealand), and Sir Frederick Moor (Natal)—was made a privy councillor. Botha had several other honours showered on him, *e.g.*, an honorary doctor's degree at Dublin, and the freedom of Manchester as well as of Edinburgh.

As soon as the guaranteed loan arrangement was published, the Transvaal Opposition in its surprise notified its conclusion to the effect that Botha had allowed himself to be "bribed" by the Liberals in order to repatriate the Chinese immediately. They had imagined that Pretoria would only be able to find money with the aid of the financiers who were interested in the Rand. In order to be able to come to such a bribery conclusion, however, one required to be completely ignorant of the recent political struggle in the Transvaal. This reproach, repeatedly levelled at Botha in English newspapers, nevertheless continued to be heard in South Africa, in a modified form. More than once I met people who positively averred that Botha was bribed in London with a considerable sum in cash in order to promote specifically English interests! It is a sad reflection to think that the greater a libel flung at a statesman, the more easily does it find credence. Botha got full measure of slander.

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XVIII

BOTHA AS A PRACTICAL STATESMAN

UNDENIABLY, Botha's three years as Transvaal Premier constituted a brilliant accomplishment. There had been no publicly controlled administration since 1899, the year of the Boer war—not to mention a responsible cabinet. Crown Colony government had followed the military *régime*; the bureaucracy that occupied public offices had been well-meaning but largely inefficient. The entire weight of proconsular authority had descended on the side of magnate interest. Forlorn attempts had been made to bolster up the country's condition with large amounts of borrowed money which, though meant for post-war reparation, had but seldom been spent judiciously. In the rest of South Africa as well as in the Transvaal a pall as of despair was hanging over the country in consequence of the omnipresent depression, caused by gradual reduction of the costly military system and the slow recovery of agriculture.

When, however, in 1910 the Transvaal Premier became Prime Minister of the Union, his own colony had meanwhile developed into the predominant factor in the political as well as economic position of the whole of the subcontinent. It would be childish to attribute this *tour de force* exclusively to the magic wand of Botha and his capable colleagues. Yet it was generally realized before very long that their determination—the outcome of common sense and calm deliberation—had saved the country from a dangerous pass, despite their lack of experience in administration or of high politics.

Exit Magnate Power.—The Pretoria Government was not slow in taking steps for the better organization of

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native recruiting for the mines. This enabled the Chinese, at the expiration of their indentures, to be repatriated without damage to the gold industry. From March 1907 until August 1910 the number of mine natives employed rose from 81,500 to 185,500. This proved Botha's contention to the effect that there was no real shortage in South Africa of unskilled labour. For the leaders of the industry the Het Volk victory meant the end of their five years' supremacy in South Africa. Most of the gold shares were held in the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. The shareholders' representatives were foreigners to South Africa, no less than those people themselves. It was therefore unthinkable that the gold magnates should have any goal beyond the highest possible dividends. It would be wrong to look on them as an inferior type of man, or to think that their public ethics differed from those of their compeers abroad. The violence of recent elections, both in England and the Transvaal, however, coupled with the dejection of "vote British" circles at their results, created all kinds of personal feeling between the new bosses at Pretoria and the managers of financial houses at Johannesburg, whose wings had been clipped.

Tension between the two groups was extreme. In reply to Merriman's congratulations on the political programme which had just been laid before the Transvaal Assembly Botha wrote, toward the middle of 1907: "It appears that the magnates intend taking up a very hostile attitude, and will do their best to bring about an acute crisis. Sooner or later the struggle has to come, and we desire to have the question decided once for all. If we are to have the crisis, the sooner we get through with it the better; as you say, it is no easy task to clear the moral cesspool of Johannesburg; but we intend doing our best to obtain that end. . . . The future promises well, and we have every hope of placing this sorely tried country on the road to prosperity and peace again."

That Botha's anxiety was not without good cause appears from Sir Lionel Phillips' *Reminiscences*, in which it is

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recorded that, as a result of the Transvaal elections, the Boers were jubilant, the Britishers dejected. The latter's annoyance, Sir Lionel states, was so intense that his Opposition friends in Parliament scarcely, if at all, had any social intercourse with Government members. Serious difficulties, he felt, appeared inescapable, unless a *modus vivendi* could be reached.

Merriman's "cesspool" denouncement of the Golden City was probably exaggerated; the level of post-war culture in the Transvaal does not, however, appear to have been very high. General Smuts, at least, wrote to Merriman in 1906, referring to Pretoria: "One lives here in an atmosphere which is entirely devoid of all culture, and is frankly materialistic in the worst sense."

But is not materialism the inevitable by-product of war? The goldfields did not get off any better. Toward the end of the same year Merriman received a letter from Smuts, containing the plaint: "The cosmopolitan population of the Rand, with its political apathy and want of principles, and its sordid absorption in material things, make me despair sometimes."

Merriman was able to mention in reply that Capetown's political apathy sometimes made him, too, despair. And nowhere in the world could one expect a soul-stirring epoch of refined culture as the sequel to a long and bitter war. The truth is that all those who had to live through the years immediately following the peace of 1902 in South Africa will never look back to them except with aversion.

Soon it became evident that Botha had selected the right kind of colleagues, and had been happy in the apportionment of portfolios. The Government gained the public's confidence, and relations between the capital and the Golden City began to assume a peaceful character. President Steyn, after a visit to Pretoria, wrote to Mr Merriman in August 1907:

> I would just like to mention that I have come away from the Transvaal very pleased with the spirit prevailing there. . . . Notwith-

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> standing their difficulties the Transvaal Ministry is doing exceedingly well. By their broad policy they have succeeded in knitting closely together all those who really have the country's interest at heart.

The same letter regretted the retention by Downing Street, now that the two colonies had autonomy, of the governors that had administered Crown colonies; these governors would, of course, tend to defend their own tradition and their own *protégés*. Merriman, the Nestor of South African politicians, judged the new Cabinet as favourably after a visit to Pretoria in November of the same year. On his return to the Cape he did not conceal the good impression made on him by Botha and his colleagues. He had a conversation with Botha, lasting the whole of a forenoon, which left him "immensely impressed with" the Transvaal Premier.

In those days Merriman, who was sixty-six years old, was rather friendly with Botha, who was twenty years his junior. They had only recently met, but appeared to be on terms of intimacy. A few months previously, Botha had acknowledged a message of congratulation from Capetown—on the Het Volk victory—by commencing his letter: "My dear Merriman." This *rapprochement* was, alas, not destined to be of a permanent nature. For years the older man continued to doubt the sincerity of Botha's doctrine to the effect that the maintenance of the Imperial connexion was in South Africa's interest for the time being. In May 1927 General Smuts made the following statement in the Union Assembly, during the flag debate:

> Mr Merriman, in later years, admitted to me that he had doubted General Botha and myself. He used to think that, in the hour of trial, we should not stand by the policy preached by us before the Great War. Well, the test came in 1914, and the great majority of Dutch-speaking South Africans remained staunch.

A striking example, this, of the almost hopeless prospects of Botha's fellowship gospel—even with people of the intellectual Merriman type.

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President Steyn's criticism of the ill-advised retention of Crown Colony governors was well founded. Lord Selborne, though without his predecessor's autocratic manner, had the mental attitude of one upholding superior authority in a vanquished country. He found it hard to identify himself with his new status of coadjutor in a 'responsible' system of government. It has already been recorded that he conferred an Upper House majority on the party that had won scarcely one-third of the Assembly seats. In the beginning it required all Botha's tact to reconcile his Governor to the changed condition of affairs. When the Cabinet resolved to reduce the, extremely expensive, constabulary—instituted in order to cow the countryside—to an ordinary police body of a size commensurate with its duties, Lord Selborne showed himself disinclined to assent. The Premier was forced formally to hint at the possibility of his resignation, before the Governor changed his mind.

Education Act and Land Bank.—Educationally, the Transvaal of 1907 was behindhand. General Smuts undertook the duty of reorganizing elementary education. Within a short period he had an Act on the statute book introducing free primary schools, and embracing at the same time equal rights for both official languages. Unlike Switzerland, the Transvaal is not inhabited by compact linguistic groups. English-speaking people all over the country are next-door neighbours to Dutch Afrikanders. These vie with each other as regards sensitiveness on the subject of their own particular language rights. It was consequently a highly delicate task to elaborate a system that combined practicability with an absence of offensive compulsion. The Education Act of 1907 is generally regarded as a fine piece of legislation; to the Transvaal it proved a blessing. General Smuts once told me that the inspiration had been Botha's; he deserved an equal share of the credit with Smuts, who emphasized that Botha, though not a scholar and ignorant of technical aspects of education, was all for good and cheap schooling. The older genera-

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tion, he used to say, could only be saved by tremendous efforts, and therefore everything should be done in order to educate the children at least.

In charge of Agriculture, Botha in 1907 sent a number of young men to Europe and America so that the knowledge gained in those countries might enable them to become instructors to their own people. In the year following the National Convention agreed to Botha's proposal that, on Union taking effect, elementary education should provisionally remain in the hands of provincial authorities.

The country districts needed two other things: a credit system, superior to the one available in our part of the world then, and liquidation of Repatriation debts, by which the efforts of many farmers to rehabilitate themselves were handicapped. Botha's offer of assistance to the Milner *régime* in connexion with the organization of relief in the districts ruined by the war had not been accepted. Although started with the best of intentions, Repatriation had ended in dismal and costly failure. Many people had been debited with the price of cattle that had either never reached them or had proved quite useless. The new Government was able, without much difficulty, to induce Parliament at Pretoria to ratify a liberal policy of writing-off.

More numerous were the objections to the Land Bank Bill, the Opposition urging that it was inspired solely by party considerations. As long ago as during the final stages of the Boer war Botha had frequently discussed with his staff officers the desirability of providing better facilities for agricultural credit. The Transvaal Land Bank, which afterward was enlarged to a Union institution, became a complete and great success; to-day it is an important and salutary factor in our public economy. A further measure for the encouragement of husbandry was the fixing of a flat rate by rail and sea—*i.e.*, between any Transvaal railway station and Western European ports—of 2s. 6d. per ton for mealies, which had the effect of soon making this cereal into one of the chief exports.

The Sheep Division—called into being by Botha—of

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the Department of Agriculture soon did good work; Transvaal wool made a name for itself on the world market. Botha was heart and soul with Dr (Sir Arnold) Theiler in his veterinary research, which made the Onderstepoort Laboratory famous in every civilized country. The investigation of irrigation schemes was encouraged. After Union he retained his interest in State initiative regarding agricultural matters, putting through a national botanical survey.

In 1909, on the eve of amalgamation, the Transvaal was the only British South African colony with a surplus in the Exchequer. By concluding a contract, binding themselves to pay for the erection of a vast and palatial complex of government offices, destined for Union departments, the Botha Cabinet wisely ensured that the compromise by which Pretoria became the administrative capital should become a living reality, without undue delay.

Was the Transvaal satisfied with its Botha *régime*? It would be almost foolish to ask such a question. And yet we got, by degrees, a class of people who were not yet prepared to appreciate the departure of the Chinese, or the fact that the incubus of Repatriation debts had been taken from round their necks! They began to crave the complete restoration of pre-war conditions, wondering why Botha, who prided himself on taking the bull by the horns, took so much notice of the "English." Men who did not bear his burdens, and could not fathom his political ideals, invented the word *papbroek* (invertebrate; cowardly indifferentist) for the express purpose of underlining their own superior brand of patriotism, whenever they used the epithet.

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XIX

BOTHA AND KING EDWARD

THE most spectacular incident during the three years of Botha's *régime* in the Transvaal was undoubtedly the presentation to the Crown of the gems cut from the famous Cullinan diamond. Found on January 26, 1905, in the Premier Mine, the stone belonged, as to more than one-half its proceeds, to the State in accordance with statute. Its tremendous size, originally 3025 carats, made it unsaleable. Experts put its insurable value at £250,000, and the Crown Colony Government did not know what to do with it. In England it was suggested that a public subscription should be opened throughout the Empire, so that the gem might be offered to the King-Emperor. The Botha Cabinet decided to offer the unique find to Edward VII. His Majesty was no friend of the Boers. He had never disguised his sympathies with Mr Rhodes. Afterward he favoured Lord Milner. It was known that Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman's post-war policy in South Africa was far from inspiring him with enthusiasm. One must admit that many influential circles in England shared his views in that respect. Hence there was every prospect that an early unification of South Africa under Dutch control would prove even more unpopular. Mr Balfour had 'fashed himsel'' at the very idea of Botha's promise, made in 1907, of returning to London within five years in such a cause!

In Pretoria it was realized that the King should at least be without any occasion for suspecting the loyalty of the Transvaal. Moreover, a pleasant surprise for the British nation was considered desirable, seeing that Westminster would shortly be asked to provide that Transvaal, which was rather hard up at the time, with a development loan. When

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the Opposition in the Assembly was informally sounded, not the slightest joy at this overwhelming proof of tangible devotion was manifested! In fact, its members did not feel called upon to lend support. They asked that the presentation should be delayed, under the pretence that the country was suffering an economic depression and many redundant officials were being retrenched.

On August 16, 1907, however, the Premier gave notice in the Assembly of a motion to offer the diamond as a gift to King Edward VII, his heirs and successors, "as an expression of the sentiment of loyalty and affection on the part of the people of the Transvaal toward his Majesty's person and throne."

The debate began on August 19. On behalf of the Progressive Party, Sir George Farrar and Sir Percy Fitzpatrick opposed on the ground of "inexpediency." Labour members, as well as Generals De la Rey and Smuts, supported the motion. Adv. Beyers (the present Minister of Mines for the Union) also spoke in favour. Mr Henry Lindsay, an Opposition whip, did likewise. Nor did Sir Abe Bailey and Sir W. Van Hulsteyn, prominent Progressives, support their party's hostile attitude.

The motion was agreed to, the voting being forty-two to nineteen. Botha's reasonable anticipation of a unanimous resolution was thwarted by the defiance of the very men who, in South Africa as well as overseas, posed as the guardians of British prestige in our country, *partibus infidelium*.

One can easily understand that among the Premier's own people there were those who, not understanding his action, traduced it, and went about wagging their heads about the gift. As far as one can gauge, the presentation produced the germ of the suspicion engendered among the people—and afterward growing rapidly—to the effect that Botha was on the high road to anglicization. What amazed the average person, however, was that the leading Johannesburg loyalists opposed the step almost to a man.

An unexpectedly early reward awaited Botha's gracious gesture. On the evening of the same day, August 19, the

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Commons approved (by a vote of 199 against 62) the guaranteed loan of £5,000,000 to the Transvaal, where the amount was urgently required. In the course of his speech on the Bill Mr Asquith, on behalf of the Government, disarmed invidious criticism by stating that the Transvaal was nowise bound to repatriate the Chinese. The Commons Opposition had insinuated that Botha had allowed



THE TRANSVAAL LOAN GUARANTEED BY GREAT BRITAIN
A cartoon by A. W. Lloyd in the Johannesburg *Sunday Times*

himself to be bribed by this generous financial treatment into adopting an implacable anti-Chinese policy; Mr Asquith laid stress on the fact that the General remained as free as ever.

The incident led to considerable discord and many repercussions in South Africa, but King Edward no longer regarded the wise Imperial statesmanship of his Liberal advisers with aversion. A large slice of the £5,000,000 loan was earmarked for Land Bank capital. It is a rather remarkable fact that several ardent 'patriots,' who took no

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pains to hide their disgust at Botha's demonstration of 'English' loyalty, never hesitated for a moment in applying for a Land Bank loan.

The King was graciously pleased to accept the uncommon present. In January 1908 the Cullinan was handed to the well-known Amsterdam firm of diamond cutters, Asscher Brothers, in the presence of the Colonial Secretary. The stone as an undivided whole, it appeared, was unsuitable for the polishing process. On February 10 the exciting operation of 'cleaving' took place. Experts as well as a representative of his Majesty attended. The result was a splendid success. The largest fragment was one of nearly 2000 carats; the next one weighed over 1000 carats, not to mention the smaller fry. In November of the same year the whole parcel was delivered in London as polished gems, there to be finely handled by jewellers. The 'pendeloque,' Cullinan I, weighs 516 carats, and the square brilliant, Cullinan II, 309 carats. The next heaviest gem, the Nizam, weighs 277 carats.

During 1909 several prominent Transvaal politicians visited London in connexion with the passage of the South Africa Act through Parliament. They were invited to lunch at Buckingham Palace. The Cullinan diamonds had been handed over only recently in their final ornamentation of Crown jewels. After lunch the King and Queen called General Botha, General Smuts, and Mr H. C. Hull aside for a view of the gems. After these had been duly admired Mr Hull (who stood well with King Edward) suggested that the other Transvaal guests—Sir George Farrar and Sir Percy Fitzpatrick—should be asked in as well. The King knew that these two gentlemen had acted as Opposition spokesmen against the presentation. His Majesty keenly enjoyed Mr Hull's mischievous fun, and so both oppositionists were summoned to witness the success of Botha's *beau geste*. They bore up as best they could against their rather awkward situation!

Unforeseen Expenditure.—The cleaving, polishing, and setting of the stones had cost as much as £35,000, for which

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no appropriation existed. Neither the King nor Mr Lloyd George, as representing his Majesty's Government, was keen on paying the amount. A position of painful uncertainty arose; fortunately the Transvaal Parliament voted the amount under the heading of unforeseen expenditure. This time the Opposition forgot to criticize; hon. members even refrained from insisting on detailed information!

It would be possible to pen a piquant tale about the vicissitudes of the Cullinan diamond.

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XX

BOTHA AND UNIFICATION

THANKS to the change of government in England toward the end of 1905, the constitutional assimilation of the four British autonomous territories in South Africa had become a question of practical politics. The new order revived an old dream: the sub-continent under one single government! All previous attempts had been the work of amateurs. Now, for the first time, the portents appeared auspicious. Until the moment when all four colonies were self-governing, closer union was out of the question, as Botha had pointed out to Chamberlain in 1902. Hardly had Campbell-Bannerman taken over in London when Merriman wrote Steyn for his opinion on the scheme to hold a "National Convention." Steyn was not in a hurry. Early in January 1906 he replied:

> The leaders are all so busy that they cannot go about to wake up the country. I have seriously thought to go round myself, but my health is poor; and a wrong construction will be placed upon it, and may hamper our friends in England.

Obviously, no initiative was to be looked for from that direction. Shortly after his return from England, and after the repeal of the Lyttelton constitution, Smuts wrote, in April 1906, to Merriman—then leader of the Opposition in the Cape—after having consulted Botha:

> There are great questions ahead of us, and we are anxious to have the advantage of your experience and insight in public affairs. And more and more in future those who mean well by South Africa will have to consult for the common good, and try to save the country from its new friends.

In May, when the grant of responsible government to

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the new colonies was no longer in doubt, Smuts wrote to Merriman: "It seems to me that in federation or unification lies the solution of our and your troubles." He saw in it the best means of countering the forces that were ignoring South African interests. Unexpectedly, help came from another quarter. Toward the end of 1906 Sir Starr Jameson, Cape Premier, sent a minute to his Governor, recommending an attempt at mutual *rapprochement.* This was the first open move on the new road to unification. Lord Selborne received a copy of the document and published, in January 1907, an able memorandum—by Messrs Lionel Curtis and Philip Kerr—strongly praising closer union on the ground that, without it, South Africa would not lend itself to efficient administration. This memorandum greatly impressed the country, forcing the problem into the arena of public discussion. Lord Selborne's enthusiasm undoubtedly promoted speedy unification and has caused lasting gratitude for his valuable help.

Obviously, the new governments at Pretoria and Bloemfontein would have to be in the saddle before anything could be done. The exact nature of the tie that was to be established between the four colonies continued to be highly problematical; Rhodesia was not forgotten either. Natal and the Free State were shy, and usually referred to federation. Jameson did the same on his return from England to Capetown in June 1907. A month later, when Botha had returned as well, Smuts—who, in those days, was in constant touch with his Premier—wrote to Merriman:

> The problem of federation is a great thing for our political intellects to wrestle with, and will lift South Africa out of the rut of selfish commercialism, in which it is now stagnating.

Unification, Pure and Simple.—He opposed "a custom and railway parliament; it won't work," for the four parliaments would never give up the control of their own railroads and customs. This was the first indication that Pretoria had resolved to aim at nothing less than union, without qualification. It felt, nevertheless, that initiative

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ought to be left to the oldest South African legislature. So it happened that on July 23, 1907, Mr F. S. Malan, on behalf of the Afrikander Bond, moved in Parliament at Capetown that Government should approach the Governments of the other autonomous British colonies with a view to considering the desirability of provisional steps for the promotion of the Union of South Africa. Jameson seconded, and the motion was carried *nem. con.*

In London Jameson had learned to know and appreciate Botha's views. President Steyn during his visit to Pretoria in August 1907 realized the success of the young Cabinet's administrative methods; he wrote to Merriman:

> Botha and Smuts seem to favour unification. In fact, the more one thinks about it, the more you become convinced that that is the only kind of Union we ought to accept.

Steyn's adherence to the unification doctrine was a precious gain to Pretoria. The Free State generally remained 'lukewarm' and *difficile* for a long time; these are Merriman's terms. General Smuts made hay while the sun was shining. He circulated among legislators a "strictly confidential" memorandum in favour of a Union constitution, placing local administrations under the authority of a central legislature. He was averse to amateur tinkering, and was quite abreast of up-to-date imperial as well as colonial relations. While these preparations were going on without fuss, Smuts informed Merriman that an "ugly spirit of separatism," resembling the pre-war one, was manifesting itself in the Transvaal; he wanted more speed in the unification movement. In Johannesburg, moreover, there were those who feared that thorough amalgamation of the four Dominions would reduce the mining leaders to political insignificance. At Pretoria a group of junior politicians, found especially among legal practitioners, agitated for the heightened independence of every colony. Their argument was that this would be the best means of defeating England's alleged schemes for the further exploitation of South Africa. Apart from these

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groups public interest was limited, but in the main it was agreed that while inverting political power in the Afrikanders, unification would secure prosperity to the country in general.

Smuts found Merriman sympathetic to his desire for making a move. In February 1908 the latter became Prime Minister of the Cape as successor to Jameson; on the 24th he wrote to Smuts:

> I quite agree as to the necessity of pushing this question of Union. If we three States—Transvaal, Orange River Colony, and Cape—insist, we can carry the thing by a *coup de main*, while, if we wait, I can quite foresee that it may be a very long business; in the interval we may be crushed by the financial situation.

A few weeks later he wrote to Steyn: "I endorse the Transvaal feeling that it is now or never." The merit, or otherwise, of preferring unification to federation therefore belongs to the Transvaal, whose attitude precipitated a decision.

The Question of £ s. d.—Merriman's alarm regarding finance was due to uncertainty regarding his railway revenue —from the paying through-traffic to the Transvaal—and the future of the customs union that had existed between the four Dominions since 1903. Cape statesmen wanted the carrying trade *via* their ports to yield such profits as would compensate for the deficit on non-paying branch lines. During the 1908 election Jameson did not scruple to boast that he had induced Botha not only to maintain the customs union—which was disliked in the Transvaal—but to give him a proper share of the carrying trade, so that the low rates on Cape agricultural lines might be kept in force, at the expense of the interior!

Natal was jealous of Portuguese Delagoa Bay, which did its best to increase its through-traffic to the goldfields, giving in exchange its Mozambique natives for the Rand mines. The intensity with which many Cape and Natal patriots abhorred, and still abhor, that 'foreign' harbour for being the nearest to the Witwatersrand cannot be ignored as an important element in South African politics. Trans-

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vaal, as a matter of fact, was the bullock, pulling the entire assets of the South African family, every member of which claimed a huge slice for himself. Botha was well on the way toward an arrangement with the Portuguese, ensuring the proper working of the harbour at Lourenço Marques. The consummation of a Transvaal-Portuguese *rapprochement*, with Delagoa Bay as the pivot, was prevented by the tragic death of Don Carlos at Lisbon, and the speed with which the preparations for South African union progressed.

The doctrine of sublimated selfishness, a very tempting one to the Transvaal—which had disposal of ample revenue from a prosperous mining industry—was rejected by the Botha Cabinet, imbued as it was with Pan-South African sentiment. In order to expose more clearly the administrative skein, which became worse tangled as time went on, the four Governments called an Intercolonial Conference. It was assured from the first that this would prove a failure, and would therefore recommend unification as the last way out of an untenable situation. Deliberations began on May 4, 1908. On the very next day members recorded their anticipated *non possumus* on the subject of the establishment of a customs and railway agreement, acceptable to the four parties concerned. With a fine gesture of despair they resolved to recommend a "National Convention," in order to push through the only remedy: closer union.

The collapse of the Conference created such a profound impression in legislative circles that the four parliaments fell over one another in their eagerness to approve the proposed convention, and to elect delegates, aggregating thirty. Botha had every reason to be satisfied. So had Merriman, for, although a parliamentarian to the backbone, he was not the man to shy at a *coup de main*! Steyn gradually converted his Free Staters to the doctrine of unification, and worked himself up to such a pitch of enthusiasm that, in a speech, he said: "Union must be as close, as economical and as beneficial as it can be made; it must leave as little loophole as possible for secession at any time." With the

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eye of faith he saw "all frontiers wiped out within a few years, all division melt away, all races amalgamate into one great nation."

One of Steyn's motives in recommending unconditional unity was the threat of an Anglo-German conflict. These were his own words: "I realized that, if we perpetuated the division into separate colonies, serious results might easily follow." In his transports, Steyn forgot that other leading Free Staters persisted in the dogma that an isolated Free State was predestined to maintain a North-South equilibrium, and therefore to act the part of *tertius gaudens*.

Off to Durban.—In Natal it could not be said that everything in the garden was lovely. Public servants and the highbrows were opposed to union; a federal drawing-together was the limit to which they were prepared to go. The Premier, Sir Frederick Moor, who was not only a farmer himself, but had the rural bias in politics, was *persona grata* at Pretoria. Botha appreciated him as a "good South African," despite the anxiety caused by the Zulu rebellion in 1906. Sir Frederick's management on that occasion had been such as to threaten not only Natal but the whole of South Africa with widespread revolt. Because the Natalians required a great deal of galvanizing into sympathy with the closer union movement, it was decided to hold the first sittings of the Convention in Durban, their charming port. The whole of official South Africa lived in optimistic anticipation. As the national poet, Jan Celliers, sang:

> Strong voices roar,
> A song resounds,
> from South to farthest North;
> from East to West, from shore to shore:
> We meet and shake each other's hand,
> our strength will forge a common land,
> and, steeled, we venture forth.

The Press, too, stirred, but with exceeding caution. The common people remained rather coy: closer union had been talked about so often; and reality was not yet!

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A few weeks before the Convention opened, Botha sat down at Rusthof, and wrote to Merriman:

"The difficulties with which we shall have to contend at the Convention will certainly be very great, but I do not think that they will prove unsurmountable. This I am convinced of, however, that before we attain closer union, we shall have a great number of 'Handsuppers.' I am building on the manliness and broadmindedness of the majority of those who will sit on the Convention, to save us from petty and narrow-minded political principles. I think that we should all do our utmost now to inspire the people of South Africa with a South African spirit. I am afraid that our work at Durban will be hampered by the heat, but I suppose that we shall be able to 'make a plan,' as the hotnot said."

For once, Botha's presentiment was unduly pessimistic.

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XXI

BOTHA AS A FATHER OF THE CONSTITUTION

SIR HENRY DE VILLIERS, Chief Justice of Cape Colony, presided over the thirty-two delegates (including a couple of Rhodesians) who met in Durban Town Hall on October 12, 1908. It was a hot, oppressive summer. Britain, in order to mark its sympathetic interest in the proceedings, had sent a couple of warships; with minute guns and fireworks these added lustre to the event. Some of the delegates—it could hardly be otherwise—had been selected because their co-operation was indispensable in shaping public opinion the right way, although they lacked administrative experience, and had never worried their heads much about economic or constitutional problems.

The Transvaalers soon proved to be better equipped than any other delegation: theirs were the ablest experts, and they brought the most accurate statistics. General Smuts was an easy first as an expert on older as well as modern imperial constitutional questions, also in regard to intercolonial legislation and jurisprudence. Mr H. C. Hull overwhelmingly mastered the financial and transport questions affecting amalgamation of the four existing systems.

Botha was not a specialist in any particular legislative or administrative branch. He had, however, reflected deeply and carefully on the best working method of making the Convention into a human as well as business success. Before very long he gave a welcome lead to the Assembly, many of whose members barely knew each other by sight.

No good purpose would be served by any calculation as to the respective contributions made by each of the thirty-three to the final result. Botha, while carefully abstaining from enforcing his own desires—once or twice a motion

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introduced by him was negatived—managed to make his influence felt all the time. Originally he applied himself to the elimination of mutual suspicion and parochial obstinacy; afterward he was busy removing the few remaining, seemingly insuperable, obstacles in the way of unity, *e.g.*, the choice of a capital. Among all the members he was one of the few who could think and feel perfectly on the South African plane.

"*Like Doves.*"—The sittings had lasted a few weeks when Jameson, chief champion of 'English' interests, wrote to his brother Sam:

> Generally we are going better than I expected. All crooning like doves. Botha is the great factor, and plays a capital game of bridge. He, Steyn, and I are great pals—so the world wags. . . . Beastly, smuggy, wet weather all the time we have been there. Probably won't get home till next year.

And on November 6:

> Botha continues the most satisfactory and far the biggest of the lot. Of course there is the slimness to look out for, but he has less of it than any of his *confrères*, and far less than our pseudo-English. . . . Steyn, too, is quite a surprise, and he and Botha are the two factors for a decent British settlement. Strange but true. Funny that my main pals to get things are Botha, Steyn, and perhaps Christian De Wet.

Talking of "slimness," it was by no means curious that members who were strangers to each other should at first have been filled with suspicion as soon as a man opened his mouth in order to state a view or propose a resolution. Botha knew how to dispel mistrust, and even to suggest approval, by his enviable charm of manner and his way of putting a proposition. One of the delegates once said to me: "He has a disarming personality." If union was to come off, it certainly was necessary to "disarm" Natal and the Free State.

Durban's summer climate did not prevent the materialization of the right Convention atmosphere, as by magic. No one but Botha was the good fairy. He not only preached moderation, but practised it consistently. He assisted the gradual victory of the principle of unqualified unification,

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which was made acceptable largely thanks to the Transvaalers' accommodating attitude. It was they who, owing to the economic importance of their country, carried the key to the position in their pockets. Even the phlegmatic Durbanites were fascinated by Botha. Nearly all the Natal delegates lived in the country. The Premier, Moor, who owed his reputation to his knowledge of native affairs and his debating powers, was not among Durban's darlings. Botha, on the other hand, succeeded in winning the town's affection with Cæsarian speed. At a municipal banquet in honour of the delegates he related how, less than ten years ago, he had ridden at the head of his commando to the outskirts of Maritzburg, the capital of Natal, and how Commandant-General Piet Joubert had with difficulty restrained his (Botha's) ambition to "eat bananas by the seaside!" This reminiscence of the Boer war did not offend the guests at all; on the contrary, they were greatly amused. Durban is the first city that erected a statue to the memory of Botha, the peacemaker *par excellence*.

On the second day of the Convention, October 13, Merriman moved a resolution affirming that in the interests of South Africa's prosperity and progress it was desirable to unite the several British colonies under one Government into a legislative Union under the British Crown, the existing Dominions to become Provinces. The discussion lasted two days; the motion passed unanimously. Unification had easily gained the day, notwithstanding the federalist proclivities of Rhodes, Hofmeyr, Jameson, and (originally) Steyn—not even to mention the Natalians. Botha did not intervene in the debate until late. The Transvaal, he said, possessed great wealth, but longed for one flag, one people, one God. It was the duty of delegates to give a lead, instead of sniffing round for any indication that might come their way as to the trend of public opinion. The gold industry as well as all other Transvaal assets would be pooled. The Transvaal was prepared to trust the rest of South Africa, satisfied to depend for its future on a parliament representative of the whole of the sub-continent.

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Sir George Farrar, leader of the Transvaal Opposition, mentioned the fact that Briton and Boer had come together thanks to the sensible, tolerant attitude of Generals Botha and Smuts. On this occasion they and he stood shoulder to shoulder, working for the unification of the country. Mr F. S. Malan, leader of the Cape Afrikanders, drew attention to the remarkable feature of the movement for closer union, consisting in the fact that it had originated in both new colonies.

This was encouraging; thus were soothed the fears of mighty Transvaal, as entertained by other members of the Convention, and their former predilection in favour of federation vanished. It was recognized that circumstances differed from those in America and Australia, in that only two among the South African States had a seaboard, the others being cut off from the ocean. This factor, even apart from other considerations, rendered it imperative that amalgamation should take the form of absolute union.

Convention and Compromise.—The Convention succeeded in finishing its task within three months and a half. The session was transferred to Capetown in November, and lasted till February 1909. The legislative result was necessarily a compromise between the divergent, innate convictions of the two races. The first bone of contention had been the franchise which, outside Cape Colony, belonged to whites only. Several motions were tabled; after a long debate Botha managed to get them referred to a sub-committee, which was instructed to produce a draft resolution. The deliberations that followed were fruitless, until on November 4 the Convention adopted Botha's scheme, maintaining the general principle of a purely white franchise (although existing rights of non-whites in Cape Colony were guaranteed). This was a victory for the Afrikander view. On the other hand, Anglo-Saxon ideas won, in that party government was decided upon as against the Boer tradition of an executive elected by popular vote and independent of a parliamentary majority.

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The choice of a capital city produced the greatest difficulty of all. The national interest demanded that it should be situated in the interior. South Africa well knew by experience that a prosperous interior is a *sine qua non* to the economic health of the entire sub-continent. Capetown, however, was in the throes of commercial depression in 1908; desperate interested parties wrung from Cape delegates the promise that the irreducible minimum on which they would insist was the establishment of Parliament at the foot of Table Mountain. This was at first not an acceptable solution to the other delegates. It looked as if British South Africa's closer union would unexpectedly be shipwrecked on the humiliating rock of the capital *impasse*. On December 9, 1908, Botha formally moved in the plenary sitting of the Convention: "It is desirable to agree on a capital."

The motion was carried, and the next day Abraham Fischer, of the Orange Free State, moved that the procedure to be followed in the choice of a capital be reported upon by a Commission, to consist of the President and one member from each delegation nominated by the respective Premiers.

This motion was also carried, and the Commission was composed of Sir Henry de Villiers, General Hertzog (Orange Free State), Mr J. W. Sauer (Cape), Mr Hyslop (Natal), and General Botha. It did not carry the matter any further, and the end of January was approaching. Everything had been settled, except the capital wrangle, which appeared to remain stationary. It was almost a tragi-comedy!

On January 30 Merriman put forward the idea of a dual capital. Botha supported. Mr Hyslop, in the course of debate, moved that Maritzburg be selected. This was negatived. Mr Hull suggested they should build a brand-new city somewhere on the banks of the Vaal. Mr Jagger wanted to let the electorate pick one of the existing capitals by referendum. President Steyn's solution was to saddle the first Union Parliament with the problem.

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Finally, on February 2, 1909, General Smuts—in consultation with Botha—moved to insert in the Constitution that Capetown would be the legislative, and Pretoria the administrative, capital, and this was agreed.

This compromise was the price the country paid for obtaining unification without being faced at the outset with a hopeless problem. The next day the Convention adjourned, and very soon the results were published, to be finally dealt with, first by the four parliaments in South Africa and definitely by the Parliament at Westminster.

Convention members were bound to secrecy, and until the last they faithfully observed this. More than once I had tried, as a journalist, to get something out of Botha on some special point or other. Always in vain! On February 2, however, when the final, decisive deliberation had run its course, and the obligation of silence no longer existed, Botha wrote me a hasty note from Capetown:

"To-morrow, after signing the draft Constitution, we break up. The eight Transvaal delegates have done their best, and were unanimous all along the line. We did not approve of everything, but, taking all things together, are satisfied. I think the Constitution is a workable one; it will soon be published. We ask your help in order to explain, and recommend, it to the public. If you do not see your way to support us, do not commit yourself until you have spoken to either Smuts or myself. I feel convinced, however, that you will back us up in order to have Union, and to establish a South African nationality. The work was hard; we are feeling done up. After a lot of trouble we decided to make Pretoria the seat of a united government, with Parliament sitting at Capetown. You will see, therefore, that Pretoria and the Transvaal are greatly privileged. This compromise is as much as we could obtain. Let us honestly support the covenant; it is an honourable understanding."

In order to understand this letter fully one has to remember that the Convention consisted of five groups of delegates from five independent Dominions, including Rhodesia.

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Often the private opinions of some member had to be made to fit in with those of his Dominion colleagues. On some cardinal point, as, for instance, language equality, the English-speaking delegates as a body (without respect of Dominion) were animated by the same feeling; this also applies to the Dutch-speaking members. The eight Transvaal delegates, after a while, stood together on all points, thanks to Botha inspiring them with confidence in the absolute reliability of his political friends in connexion with the latter's intention never to abuse the probable control by the Dutch of the political development of United South Africa. Mr Henry Lindsay, one of the eight, wrote a letter to *The Volkstem* in 1927 in the course of which he says:

> It soon became plain that, unless English- and Dutch-speaking members mutually agreed to trust each other implicitly, making equal rights in every way and respect for each other's traditions and national feeling the basis of negotiation, it would be mere waste of time to proceed. I was one of the English-speaking members, and did not belong to the Government party. Sir G. Farrar and Sir P. Fitzpatrick were the other Transvaal Opposition delegates. Several times, when negotiations were on the point of breaking down, owing to the lack of guarantees for the rights, traditions, and feelings of the English section, Generals Botha and Smuts appealed to me, as an Afrikander born, to move my fellow-delegates from the Transvaal regarding these matters, so that they might be satisfied with the honourable promises and good faith of the Afrikaans-speaking section of the people. To those appeals I responded. I persuaded them, and not against their own inclination either, but cheerfully they assured me of their confidence. From that moment mutual faith was the basis of further negotiation and of the successful result.

This valuable information explains Botha's meaning in his letter of February 2 in referring to the draft Constitution as an "honourable understanding." The satisfaction it radiates compares favourably with Botha's pessimistic mood just prior to the Convention. He called the document a "covenant" and an "honourable understanding." It is clear that he saw in it the ardently desired instrument

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for the success of his endeavour, since Vereeniging, to promote British-Dutch co-operation. In 1907 he was able to boast of the Transvaal and Free State autonomy. To Balfour's rather tart, "Well, Botha, you have done it. What will come of it?" he had replied with the almost arrogant assurance that, in five years' time, he would return to England in order to put through South African Union. Balfour then exclaimed curtly, "The thing is impossible, is incredible." In less than two years' time the incredible and impossible had come to pass.

Formal completion of the political unification, over which so many statesmen had racked their brains, was a matter of but a few months now! Is it, then, too much to suppose that February 2 was perhaps one of the most beautiful days in Botha's life?

The Constitution was the child of sincere co-operation between the representatives of both sections of the people. The Dutch in those days predominated numerically and were likely to predominate politically, if keeping together. The British section was impoverished, as far as political power goes. It had lost its privileged position of some half a dozen years previously with remarkable quickness, once the gold magnates had been driven from their commanding citadel. The English section, by joining with their eyes open, and working together in obtaining a settlement that apparently conferred the power of government on Dutch-speaking South Africa in perpetuity, showed an amount of South African spirit that no one has a right ever to forget.

Public Opinion.—As far as the draft Constitution itself is concerned, this, it is true, was the product of a hole-and-corner meeting of a couple of dozen politicians—Merriman had spoken of a *coup de main*—rather than the outcome of a clearly formulated popular aspiration. The ordinary, average individual must work hard for a living; not for him the academic speculations on fiscal or constitutional dogma, however interesting these might be! The public at large did not prefer union to federation, any more than it

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THE UNION BUILDINGS, PRETORIA

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languished for large provincial or municipal entities, rather than for small ones. People felt grateful to the Convention for having given South Africa a pleasant surprise in the shape of the mutual forbearance and determination of its members.

With childlike faith the nation began to hope for the early disappearance of red-tape of officialdom and the abolition of so many flashy legislatures; consequently it felt sanguine as to the coming reduction in public expenditure and in taxation! Delegates' neglect of the opportunity to get Rhodesia to join the Union was hardly noticed. This failure, however, is not least among the reproaches to which the thirty-three prominent South Africans exposed themselves, A.D. 1909.

Nevertheless, everyone, except a small group of politicians —who had made up their minds not to allow themselves to be convinced—was pleased with the prospect of the coming change. It was regarded as, and turned out to be, an improvement. Botha without delay visited almost the whole of the Transvaal. Practically everywhere he evoked unanimous endorsement of the draft Constitution. The journey fatigued him so much that he had to recuperate at Rusthof for a few weeks. In April the parliaments of the Cape, Free State, and the Transvaal met. The draft was ratified; Natal held a referendum, of which the upshot was the same. Only the legislators of Cape Colony formulated a few amendments, to be discussed without delay by another Convention meeting.

South Africa, constitutionally, was one at last. It took years before the Union welded its fragments into a vital whole. This process proved a much more painful one than most people in 1909 had any idea of. And at the time of writing it has not yet been completed by any means.

At the conclusion of the Boer war it was stated that, after the struggle of a century between the Boers and the Empire, the first real peace treaty had been signed at Vereeniging, and not before. The 1909 Constitution is the first spontaneous act of real political identification as

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between Dutch- and English-speaking South Africa. To render this consummation possible the transcendent inspiration of a great man was necessary. Our country was fortunate in the possession of such a man in the person of Louis Botha, and at the exact moment.

When it was all over, he did his best in order that the British nation might share the satisfaction South Africa was experiencing at the time. To the *Times* he gave a message for publication, expressing the desire that King and country might realize that the people of South Africa had shown themselves worthy of the trust reposed in them on the grant of responsible government, and trusting that they would give their goodwill to the young nation that had just come into being.

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XXII

BOTHA AND ASQUITH

THE birth in February 1909 of a Union Constitution did not call forth any jubilation among those for whom it was destined. The parliaments of South Africa and Westminster ratified it without any show of enthusiasm. The Natal referendum ended in a three-to-one majority in favour. It was only in Capetown that serious bickering arose in Government circles, Jan Hofmeyr blocking the passing of the draft. Merriman, supported by Mr F. S. Malan and Sir Starr Jameson, worked for ratification. Hofmeyr managed to get some of the amendments he advocated passed for submission to a final Convention, fixed for May in Bloemfontein. His agitation was specially concerned with the provision of small, one-member constituencies, instead of large, three-member ones.

In view of these difficulties, Botha wrote Merriman a letter from Rusthof in the middle of April; except the first three words it was in Afrikaans, which the Cape Premier understood, and ran as follows:

MY DEAR MERRIMAN,

I notice your upper lip has been sweating hard, hasn't it? I fancy your whole body will sweat at the next Convention, if so be that you are going to father the Cape amendments. One thing is certain, Fitz (Sir Percy Fitzpatrick) is so angry that he is leading the assault even now. I agree with you it is a pity that he and Chaplin are not rather keeping silent, for we must exercise all the forbearance we can muster, and have patience with each other. As I see things, we are living in a period that is more critical than any in the past. We shall have to be very careful, otherwise I can see clearly that, instead of union, we are in for an amount of division that will be fatal to us. Sometimes I feel anxious, but fortunately I shall never say die, but continue to do my best.

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South Africa having finally given its blessing, the baby was taken to Great Britain, in July, for its christening, under the care of Sir Henry de Villiers and a couple of dozen delegates. The United Kingdom happened to be suffering from tremendous commotion, caused by Lloyd George's sensational budget. In addition, one of those crises in the Lords, to which people in those days were more or less accustomed, occurred. What with all this effervescence the little fledgling from overseas was hardly taken any notice of. After a few conversations between the delegates and the Colonial Secretary, the Bill was introduced in the Lords. It passed its third reading in the Commons on August 19, and on September 20, 1909, was assented to by the King.

Among those appointed to assist Sir Henry de Villiers in London, if necessary, was Botha. On various occasions he met Mr Asquith, then Prime Minister; at Downing Street he was treated with the consideration due to one who would most likely be the first Union Prime Minister. President Steyn, who also came over, was strongly advised by his doctor to abstain from active participation in politics during the next three years. The tactful medico gave his patient hopes of a complete cure in the long run; Steyn had no difficulty in believing him. Without a murmur the great, patient Free Stater—looked upon by many as the favourite among candidates—resigned himself to his fate. Shortly afterward he refused the offer of a senatorship.

The Union's Governor-General.—Those were busy days in London, particularly toward the end of July. On the 24th Botha was present as a privy councillor, together with Lord Selborne, Sir Starr Jameson, and Sir F. Moor, at the ceremony of swearing-in Merriman. Two days later the South African Premiers met at the Colonial Office, where official instructions for the Union's Governor-General were being prepared. It was decided that this distinguished intermediary between the British Government and the authorities at Pretoria—the Governor-General's status has since undergone a change—was at the same time to be High

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Commissioner for the native territories adjoining the Union. To-day the Governor-General represents the King only. It was arranged that in his Excellency's absence the Chief Justice of the Union (not, as hitherto, the senior officer commanding) was to act. As High Commissioner his Excellency remains in direct touch with his Minister of oversea territories at Westminster.

On July 30 the British Government gave an evening reception at the Foreign Office in honour of the delegates. South African circles in London were well represented; President Steyn on this occasion made the acquaintance of Lord Roberts. The lunch at Buckingham Palace, where the Cullinan diamonds were so much admired, has been described in another chapter.

Botha has told me that Asquith sounded him as to the personality of the Governor-General who had to be appointed. "Give us the best man in your Cabinet," Botha said. Laughingly, Asquith replied that he could not quite spare his best men! At a subsequent interview Asquith mentioned Lord Gladstone and Lord Buxton. Botha then stated that the Boers' respect for the late Mr Gladstone made the appointment of the latter's son a *desideratum*. And so Lord Gladstone became the first Governor-General of South Africa, Lord Buxton being second on the list. A further subject of discussion was the usual honours list; fourteen out of thirty-three members of the Convention were willing to accept. In proportion to their number, the Transvaalers showed the greater modesty. Botha was strongly urged to take a peerage. Neither he, nor his wife, however, at any time contemplated the acceptance of distinctions of this kind. So as not to offend, he took, in August 1912, an honorary generalship in the British army.

It was arranged that Union would start on May 31, 1910. A cabinet would be formed, in a provisional way and pending the result of the first parliamentary elections. Botha's health was not of the very best in those days. His digestion was out of order, and during August he had to

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take the waters at Kissingen. His cure over, Botha made a short stay at Paris in order to purchase at Rambouillet, the famous merino stud farm, rams for his Department of Agriculture.

A First-rate Sheep Expert!—While in London, I was asked to assist, and therefore saw to it that a formal introduction was obtained for General Louis Botha, Prime Minister of the Transvaal, to the manager of the farm. On our arrival, Botha requested to be allowed to choose from among the three-year-olds. Accompanied by a foreman, we went in among a herd of some 150. After a careful inspection, Botha separated about a dozen rams from the rest. These he once more inspected with extra care, finally selecting three for purchase. The numbers, burnt into their horns, were then reported to the manager, who consulted his stud book and, visibly perturbed, stated that two out of the three could not possibly be sold; they were the pick of the whole bunch!

Botha, annoyed, asked for an explanation. "Tell your Minister," the excited manager said, "that when I was notified of the coming visit of the famous Boer general, I never dreamt that he was such an exceptionally clever sheep expert. On such occasions I always have our very best rams kept out; I apologise, and hope General Botha will not mind the inconvenience I have caused him."

Botha then asked for leave to make a selection from the two-year-old rams. "Never!" the worried manager exclaimed. "I shall never be allowed to permit such a capable expert as your Premier to take the pick of my two-year-olds. We have to keep them for our own use."

The end of the matter was that the manager, after a long consultation with his foreman, and on receiving a higher offer from Botha, reluctantly surrendered the three animals originally selected. When I complimented Botha on his skill in judging sheep, he replied that whatever occupations he had followed, that of a farmer came nearest to his heart.

On our way back to Paris we used one of those monumental military routes known to everyone who has done

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France. I thought the chauffeur would know his way about, but Botha insisted with increasing emphasis that we were off the track, although he had only once before visited Paris. At last we met a cyclist who confirmed Botha's diagnosis and showed us the way. This shows how keen was Botha's sense of locality.

After a visit to Holland in order to buy Friesland cattle, the General returned to South Africa. A great deal of spade-work was awaiting him in connexion with unification of the four Dominions. It was not an easy task: there were four heterogeneous public services, whereas the component parts of the Union-to-be were in a state of flux, economically and politically. The public debt, inherited by the Union from its Dominions, required to be treated with care, and so did the reorganization of the general finances.

No wonder that Merriman, in wishing Abraham Fischer the compliments of the season at the end of 1909, warned him: "The next year will be one of stress and strain."

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XXIII

BOTHA AND DR JAMESON

WHEREAS our Constitution is bound up with the party system, there did not exist in the year of Union any community of economic or other interests suitable for crystallization into large party groups. Every Province had its own parties, which had originated in parochial issues. Under Union there was no longer any *raison d'être* for them. The Chinese invasion had not caused Free Staters or Cape people any sleepless nights, any more than the financial difficulties of Western Province wine farmers had disturbed the Witwatersrand or Natal. One found neither widely varying platforms nor predominating slogans. A general election could hardly divide the nation to any extent.

Race feeling, it is true, continued as an asset that could easily be exploited by stump orators. The South Africa Act, however, was inspired by the very desire to eliminate enmity between Boer and Briton. What, then, would have been more blissful than to hold the first Assembly election in a paradisaical atmosphere? "Fresh start" and "Best man government" became the cries, and were intended to obliterate old party divisions in order to provide a clean slate for the first Union Cabinet.

The protagonist of this political idyll was the late Sir Starr Jameson—Dr Jameson and "Dr Jim," as he is remembered by his contemporaries. His reasoning was of so convincing a nature that he was able to persuade Botha to adopt an attitude of benevolent neutrality to the scheme. During the Raid, in December 1895, Field-Cornet Botha had been one of the first to respond to the call of his country. The burghers of Vryheid were ordered by

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Pretoria to guard the south-eastern border against any invasion from Natal or Zululand. Ever since those days Jameson had represented, to at least half the people of South Africa, the personification of flagrant breach of faith, oversea acquisitiveness, and cynical violation of the most elementary principles of law. Despite his subsequent actions as a Cape Minister and a member of the Convention, and notwithstanding the years during which he systematically studied the aspirations of his Dutch fellow-countrymen, he never succeeded in entirely removing the self-imposed blot on his escutcheon. In fact, the circumstance that this political felon was allowed to boss the show at Capetown within ten years of the Raid merely increased the intensity of some people's ire. Jameson never succeeded in shaking off either his indiscreet admirers or his irreconcilable persecutors.

Owing to his predilection for frequent and lengthy trips to Europe Jameson was practically a stranger to South Africa, except the Cape and Rhodesia. He had never come into contact much with leaders of public opinion. In 1903, in order to curry favour with the non-white vote in the Cape, he indignantly opposed Botha's alleged desire to abolish the Protectorates in order to force the natives to work in the mines—thus rendering the Chinese superfluous. Backed by but a small majority he accepted the Cape Premiership in 1904. He did so without the slightest vestige of enthusiasm. His immediate party friends he describes as "the most awful crew," and hon. members as "this beastly House." Nostalgia for golf courses in England never left him.

Botha, who was ten years his junior, did not meet him until the Imperial Conference in 1907. At once he realized how useful it would be for the whole of South Africa if friendly relations could be established between Pretoria and Groote Schuur, the Cape Premier's official residence. Botha had ceased to trouble about Jameson's misdeeds of eleven years before. Later in the year they again met at Bloemfontein, where an ocean freight confer-

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ence was being held. The Convention days of 1908 heightened the desire on both sides for closer intercourse. A couple of weeks after the adjournment of the Convention, Jameson visited the Transvaal. On March 15, 1909, he wrote to his brother Sam: "Have just been up to Pretoria to get Botha to squeeze Moor, which he will try to do." Probably the intention was to move the Natal Premier to join the deputation that went to London in order to see the South Africa Act through the Westminster Parliament. Or was it to make Natal change its dangerous policy toward the Zulus?

The Union Cabinet.—Not long afterward people began to discuss the formation of the first Union Cabinet. Jameson's brain-wave was to form a "fresh start" combination. He did not mean a coalition between existing groups. What he wanted was to remove the existing party organizations in order to obtain a completely new orientation. A purely business Government would take over for the time being; fresh party cleavage would result from economic considerations.

During the deputation's stay in England, about the middle of 1909, Botha openly announced his objection to coalition. Jameson, however, did not relinquish his "best man" idea. During a considerable portion of 1909 I was in Europe—frequently in London. One fine day in September Botha told me he was going to Scotland. I proposed a comfortable meal near the terminus (he was never a friend of casual meals). He enlightened me on the scheme that Jameson was going to lay before him. "You'll see the Doctor just now," he said; "he, too, is going to Scotland. We shall be able to talk at our ease there." While we were sauntering along the brilliantly lit train on the station platform, Jameson's squat figure appeared. With unwonted liveliness he greeted Botha, who by this time had become a rather big and heavy man. The prospect of a holiday, accompanied by Botha, evidently braced Jameson up. He actually succeeded in getting Botha not to offer active opposition to the scheme. Other

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politicians, however, refused to bite. On December 7 Jameson wrote to his brother from Capetown: "Botha writes me that he is anxious to go the lines we talked over in Scotland. I shall see him shortly, and then will know what to believe."

At the end of the year the two met again at Pretoria. Botha agreed to give the idea a chance, provided Jameson was able to convert the other men who counted. Without delay Jameson sounded President Steyn, Frederick Moor, Merriman, Sauer, and Schreiner. All his efforts were in vain. In January 1910 he wrote to Sam: "Merriman was mulish."

Mr Merriman on January 22 made a public speech in which he condemned the scheme. This was two days before Botha was due to visit Capetown. Jameson wrote once more: "Botha has behaved perfectly straightly with me all through, but in the end, I should say, he will go with his own people."

The Death-blow.—A few days later, a final discussion between Merriman, Fischer, and Botha gave the idea its death-blow. Jameson, who had awaited that decision with exemplary patience, spoke at the birth of the Unionist Party, which took place toward the end of February at Bloemfontein, and became leader of the Opposition in the Assembly.

Botha's aloofness from the agitation is quite intelligible. He gained the conviction that South Africa at that time was not capable of viewing its politics in the light of cold reason. Logically the "fresh start" doctrine was unassailable, but it did not fit in with the human element in the average South African.

Moreover, Jameson was no longer a suitable person for figuring prominently among the select few "best men." For ministerial work, for constant activity in Parliament, in the country, and over a desk, he lacked the necessary 'vim.' His health left much to be desired. His ambition had dwindled to microscopic proportions. In the middle of 1910, while the whole sub-continent was racked by election

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fever, he opened his heart to his brother: "My hope is to get out of the whole thing decently, and carry out my original plan of Rhodesia and London." Disheartened by the failure of his *idée fixe*, he wanted to go to London and devote all his time to the interests of the Chartered Company. In the depths of his being he had never identified himself with South Africa. In 1907 he jokingly threatened Sam: "I shall beat you at golf when I come back." For this ex-Premier of the Cape, England was the country to which he "came back." It was his real home, for all his sensational thirty years' career, from Kimberley *via* Doornkop to Groote Schuur. The time was past when the fate of a Dominion could be considered safe in the keeping of one whose heart and soul longed for an oversea country 6000 miles away.

The South African National Party.—In the middle of June 1910 Botha held his first public meeting at Pretoria. A manifesto set out the platform of the "South Africa National Party," with which was incorporated Het Volk. His attitude to Jameson was elucidated, because people were still talking of these things.

"The first point I had to decide when I was asked to form a Government," Botha explained, "was the principle on which to do so. Was it to be a coalition or to consist of men from the four existing Cabinets? The latter was the only practicable way. Any other step would have been fatal to South Africa. Even while in England, I pronounced clearly against coalition. Subsequently, my friend Dr Jameson broached the subject to me. Later, we discussed the matter in South Africa. I must candidly confess that he was able to make out a very strong case. He impressed me. He came nearer my heart. If a public for such a scheme could have been found in South Africa, I should not have persisted in my attitude taken up in England. South Africa, however, is unwilling. Talk of coalition, to our people, is as a red rag to a bull! Nothing then remains but to select the Cabinet from the four existing ones. How otherwise could you get together

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ten men from any category? Just try it! We have had trouble enough, even without going beyond existing Governments."

For convenience sake Botha always referred to "coalition," although Jameson's "best man" scheme contemplated a clean slate. Botha's unequivocal refusal still left both President Steyn and Mr Merriman full of suspicions. The former feared that with Jameson in the Cabinet, Rhodesia's amalgamation with the Union would be forced through. Many another politician kept his ears to the ground. Botha's prestige suffered when he was seen in the company of Jameson—that unpardoned miscreant! President Steyn later interpreted the feelings of thousands when, in 1911, he wrote to Mr Merriman: "Some persons seem to forget so easily.... I cannot understand this sudden friendship for Jameson. Though I am quite willing to credit Jameson with his moderation, in the Convention and since, I yet feel I dare not forget that to him and the cosmopolitan horde behind him we owe all the suffering...."

"*My Friend Jameson.*"—Botha's defiant words "my friend Jameson" undoubtedly painfully impressed many of his followers. Even in the glorious year 1911, when the South Africa Party was established by the aid of all four Provinces by both sections of the population at the historical Bloemfontein Congress, "eternal yesteryear" continued to play a predominant part among the masses.

The fiasco of the "fresh start" notion left Botha and Jameson quite friendly. They continued to offend people by their unchanged relations. In June 1910 during the general election, which kept them apart on different platforms, an observant politician wrote to a Capetown friend with reference to the fight between Botha and Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, who were wooing the same Pretoria constituency:

> Perhaps we shall, in the course of events, be able to form some idea of the real inwardness of the negotiations between the Premier and Dr Jim. They were lunching together at the Pretoria Club

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> the other day. I went up to the table, and said, "Which is the lion, and which the lamb?" Jameson tapped his chest, and replied, "Lamb, lamb!" Many a true word is spoken in jest.

The letter-writer forgot that coalition was no longer practical politics to Botha from the day when it became clear that his supporters would have none of it. It is quite probable that he continued to advertise his personal friendship with Jameson in order to please the English-speaking electorate of Pretoria East. He knew the prejudices that stood in his way, and was childishly eager to top the poll.

Jameson's version of the meeting at the club to his brother was:

> I lunched with Botha last week, and talked the whole thing out with him. It is the old story; he funked splitting up his own people at the start; hates most of his colleagues, but talks of getting rid of the old gang in a couple of years. He has been a much weaker vessel than I suspected.

While nervous followers accused Botha of 'English' tendencies, Jameson was upset because Botha feared a rupture among his own people! Sir Lionel Phillips, a political sympathizer of Jameson's, in his *Memoirs* concludes that Botha's was the correct attitude, and that 'the best-man' notion "was premature." He attributes its failure to "natural appetite for the loaves and fishes of office among Botha's political followers; and he yielded."

As regards the supposed hatred of colleagues, Botha felt the drawback arising from—often awkward—claims to portfolios. There was an unwritten and foolish idea that no Cabinet would be presentable unless every one of the four Provinces was represented in it by a tacitly fixed number of its very own politicians. As if administrative genius depended on square miles of territory, or on the census figures! Such political conditions, however, reduced the value of his first Cabinet as a body. It correspondingly affected the healthy growth of the youthful Union's organism. Botha was greatly troubled by this aspect of

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the case, even apart from the poor calibre of several individual Ministers.

Jameson Departs.—Parliament had not been in session long before it became known that the Opposition leader was anxious to go into well-earned retirement. In August 1911 Jameson wrote from London to his lieutenant, Sir Thomas Smartt, that he wanted to leave politics. On April 10, 1912, he showed emotion in his leave-taking from Botha, who in the Assembly paid a tribute to him. Once again Botha fearlessly called him "my friend," and mentioned his "deep affection" for him.

As Opposition chief Jameson had assisted considerably in rendering the work of Parliament fruitful. It was a strange 'circus' in which Botha originally had to crack the leader's whip, both in regard to the Assembly and the Senate. It was a fortunate thing for the Union that, in the initial period, appreciation of each other's personality by the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition smoothed the way of both the Legislature and the Executive.

Sir Starr Jameson died in London on November 26, 1917.

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XXIV

BOTHA AND MERRIMAN

When the United States of America made their entry on the world stage, George Washington was the only conceivable President. In United South Africa the position was not quite so simple. But recently a protracted war had driven the two white races and their leaders asunder; healing the wounds caused by that war took time. Apart from this, the country was in the happy position of possessing more than one citizen with a Washington's merits. Small nations, too, have their periods of abundant superior figures, whilst a big community sometimes has to look long, and vainly, for a single political genius. The Dutch, assisted by purposeful allies from the other section—especially once Jameson's "fresh start" chimera had disappeared—were clearly indicated as those who would have to take the lead in politics. This no longer led to heart-searchings, particularly because Natal, which had always been looked upon as the citadel of what passed for British ideals, expected to do well out of such a combination.

President Steyn's delicate health excluded him from the list of candidates for the Premiership. Botha and Merriman remained. The latter could point to his age: he was nearly seventy; in addition to forty years of platform experience he had had a distinguished parliamentary as well as administrative career. High-spirited and intellectual, he stood first among the old guard, not merely in the Cape but throughout South Africa. He moreover enjoyed in peculiar measure the trust of the Dutch. His tongue was sharp, and he had the reputation of being a good custodian of the public purse and posed as a convinced champion of popular government.

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As things were in 1910, no danger threatened the Union either internally or from abroad. The first Union Cabinet's principal task, it seemed, would be to amalgamate the four administrations, push through urgent consolidation of legislation, organize finance and defence, and generally get the new edifice shipshape. Had Botha, with his Transvaal friends, been willing to join a Cabinet under the Cape 'grand old man'—proof to the contrary was never called for—Merriman would have made a first-rate Union premier, even if but for a short period, provided he displayed the knack of keeping together a parliamentary majority.

He himself felt that he could lay claim to the position, the Cape deserving consideration as being the oldest colony, and he being the Nestor of South African premiers. So as to remove any possible uncertainty, he clearly indicated in a public speech, "Barkis is willin'," and his candidature was supported by President Steyn. It was the last named who inspired Free State politicians; he could see no good in a possible premiership of Botha, with his Cullinan diamond affair and his objectionable friendship with Jameson—not to mention sundry further grievances, nurtured by Steyn against Pretoria. For instance, the Free State had got its autonomy six months later than the Transvaal! The Transvaal Government, too, being flush of revenue, threw its money about wholesale! General Hertzog and Mr Abraham Fischer openly acclaimed the Cape candidate. Steyn's 1907 enthusiasm for the energetic men at the helm in Pretoria had shrunk considerably.

Downing Street Pro-Botha.—As to Botha's chances, it was the Governor-General whose choice would decide; but all those who in 1909 were in a position to gauge current feeling were able to see that Downing Street favoured the Boer statesman. Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman's successor thought a great deal of Botha, especially after the short but brilliant record as Transvaal Premier—an appreciation that was fully shared by the Witwatersrand Opposition. Botha had freed South Africa from magnate domination, but had always looked after the mines, first as a Volksraad member,

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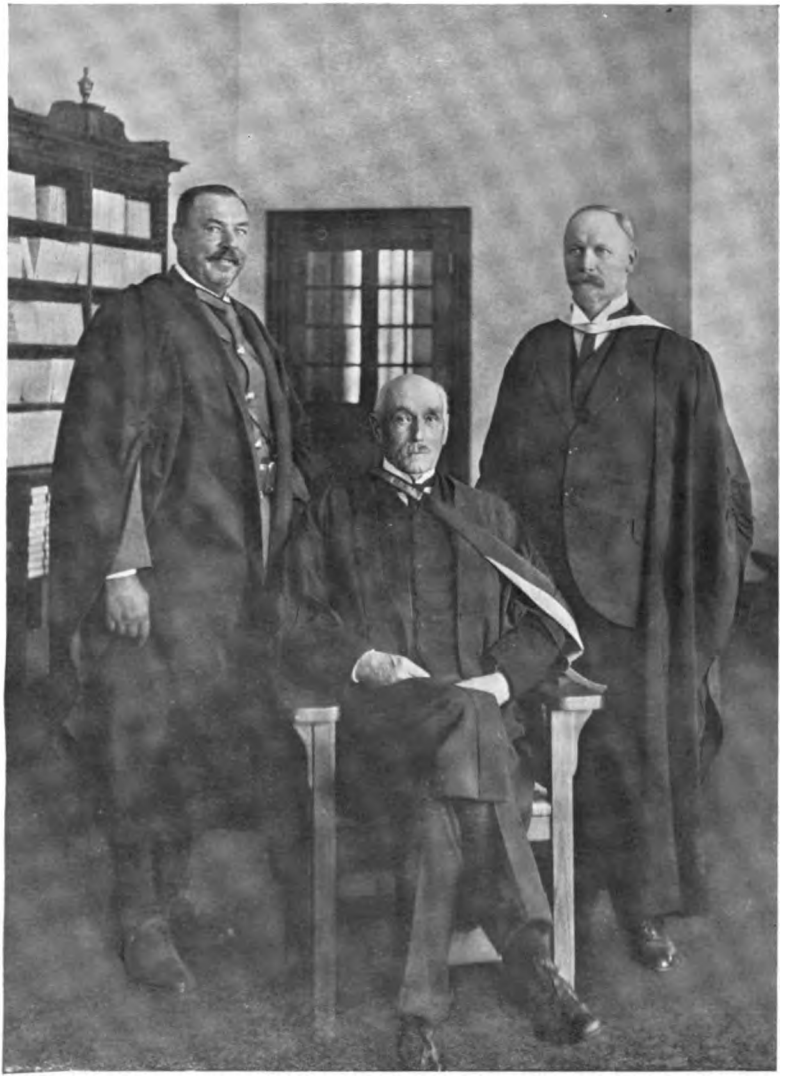
then as a Commandant-General of the Republic, and finally as the provider of ample native labour.

Merriman, on the other hand, was known to be antipathetic to Johannesburg men and things; he delighted in calling the Golden City names. In 1903, when a "formidable" deputation of Afrikander politicians waited on Joseph Chamberlain, as he passed through Capetown on his way back to England—and every word uttered was listened to by two continents—Merriman introduced members as deserving country-people, in contradistinction to "noisier and more busy communities, which would perhaps pass away, when nothing would remain of Kimberley and Johannesburg but chasms and *débris* heaps."

Leading men in England fully realized that the initial vitality of the Union would depend on the prosperity of its mineral industries. And England, in 1910, was able to determine who was to be Union premier. In his own province Botha enjoyed an indisputable prestige. A trustworthy Cape politician who, in May 1910, was travelling about in order to find out what people were thinking, told me that the Transvaal was unanimously pro-Botha. The Free State was lukewarm, without being anti-Botha. Natal favoured Botha; Merriman very recently had called it a "coolie-ridden colony!" In the Cape Botha did not lack sympathizers, especially among wine-farmers, who resented Merriman's having maintained, in the face of their protests, recent unpopular excise measures, under threat of his resignation. Jan Hofmeyr, owing to other causes, had become embroiled with Merriman to such an extent that they were no longer on speaking-terms, and only communicated with each other through the party whip.

This review of the situation was confirmed, as to Natal, by Jameson's letter to his brother of January 1910, in which he vents his spleen at the poor reception of his "best-man government" by Maritzburg and Durban as follows: "I find they are ostensibly British, but really in Botha's pocket as the dispenser of good things." Jameson forgot to remember that Durban had always been at loggerheads

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GENERAL BOTHA, MR J. X. MERRIMAN, AND GENERAL SMUTS

From a photograph taken in 1910, when South Africa had become united, and after the bestowal of University honours.

Photo Arnold Keyzer

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with Capetown and Port Elizabeth, one port grudging the other its share in the Transvaal carrying trade. Natal felt less safe under the Cape umbrella than under a Botha *régime*, Botha being well acquainted with the Garden Colony's requirements.

Things being as they were in the Cape, the small measure of Jan Hofmeyr's support for Merriman appears from a letter written at a German watering-place on September 17, 1909, shortly before the former's death. In it he tells his Cape friends that

> In England most of the leading men want Botha. Botha, I imagine, is the coming man. He may be more pro-Rand than is to our liking, but he will please us even less if, owing to Cape strife and squabbling, he is compelled to look to the Rand for support. You must understand that I shall not object to Merriman, if selected. Our majority, however, will not be great enough—neither will our party efficiency and staunchness suffice—to enable us to withstand discord, springing from personal or territorial jealousies. You will therefore do well by being on your guard!

When Lord Gladstone landed at Capetown during the second half of May 1910 no one among the public at large had any inkling as to the Governor-General's preference. A small circle of interested observers, who had studied the atmosphere in Westminster chancelleries, had sensed there a feeling in favour of Botha being chosen. Botha himself was aware of this. Lord Gladstone had publicly denied the story—whispered here and there—to the effect that his mandate was to send for Botha. The responsibility, his Lordship states, rested entirely with him, as Governor-General.

His Excellency spent two days listening to prominent politicians who had come to Capetown in order to tender their advice; he duly jotted down his notes of the interviews. General Smuts naturally recommended General Botha, his reason being that the task of forming the first Government, and appointing the first heads of departments, should be entrusted to an advocate of Union from that Dominion which had made the greatest sacrifices in the cause of

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unification. Mr F. S. Malan succeeded Jan Hofmeyr as leader of the Afrikander Bond; it is interesting to note that he, too, was on the side of Botha. He was thus acting in the spirit of his recently deceased predecessor, who toward the end had pretty well lost interest in Mr Merriman's claims.

For two days South Africa was in suspense, mitigated by composure. The bulk of the people regarded either of the candidates as eminently acceptable, the good qualities of each being openly recognized. On May 21 the Governor-General called on Botha to form a Cabinet, which was to start work on June 1. After consulting F. S. Malan, the Premier wrote the following letter, addressed: "The Rt. Hon. John X. Merriman, Prime Minister, Capetown":

DEAR MR MERRIMAN,

I have just been entrusted by Lord Gladstone with the task of forming the first Union Government, and I take the first opportunity to ask you whether you will do me the honour to join it. Not only is it my strong personal wish that you may see your way clear to do so, but I feel sure that the people of South Africa, who value your life-long public services and unique experience, expect that you would continue to serve the country and assist in making a success of the Union, in the establishment of which you have taken so distinguished a part. As the time for forming a Government is now very limited, please let me know as soon as possible what your views are. If you prefer to talk the matter over with me, I shall be glad to see you at any time you may appoint.

Yours very sincerely,
LOUIS BOTHA

It is plain that Merriman was the very first person to be asked by the future Premier to join the Cabinet, and was left free as to the choice of portfolio. The answer came by return:

TREASURY, CAPETOWN
21 *May*, 1910

DEAR GENERAL BOTHA,

I have to thank you for your kind and generous letter. I do not think that much good would be attained by my joining your Government, and it is possible that I may do more by

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supporting it from outside. It will be a good opportunity for me to take a much-needed rest. I must ask you therefore to excuse me.

Yours sincerely,
J. X. MERRIMAN

Botha's courteous—and, in the circumstances, correct—offer of any portfolio Merriman might desire was rejected. President Steyn and General Hertzog did their best to persuade him to join, though the premiership was not within his reach. At the same time they easily reconciled themselves to Merriman's decision to stand out, although the Governor-General's choice displeased them. On June 1 General Hertzog wrote, on assuming office at Pretoria:

> It was with the greatest feeling of disappointment that I heard that you had finally decided not to join the Ministry . . . though you had decided wisely. My esteem for you is too great to have desired you to sacrifice your high standing by taking a subordinate position in the Ministry, however much from a more selfish point of view I would have been pleased to have you with us; and, I am sorry to say, even tried to get you with us. There are some men—the best, and therefore not always the most fortunate—whose good name and high reputation are not their own but that of their country; and who have, therefore, to take care that these are well preserved. From that point of view alone your decision must be justified even as that of President Steyn would have been justified, had he been asked to join and take a minor position.

It is a delicate question whether healthy patriotism requires a prominent politician to take office 'under' another such of the same complexion. Of premiers there can be only one, and if the country boasts other high-quality leaders are these entitled to send a curt refusal when they are asked to serve their people in a subordinate position? Or may individual susceptibilities be expected to yield to the public interest? Did not Abraham Fischer and Sir Frederick Moor lay down their position of premier in the Free State and in Natal and accept membership of the Union Cabinet 'under' Botha? Had not Merriman himself, after having been Premier, accepted office under Schreiner? How can leadership, in view of our party-

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government system, be practicable if the most prominent politicians shrink from accepting 'minor positions'?

Merriman Disgruntled.—Merriman's temperament did not permit him to hide his chagrin. At the outset he was annoyed by the fact that Botha's letter was in typescript, instead of manuscript. In an outburst of temper he told his friends that, much as he liked Botha and admired his soldierly qualities, the younger man's drawbacks as a politician riled him. He particularly mentioned the Jameson "intrigue" and the wicked political methods that had taken root at Pretoria: caucus, "steamroller," waste of public funds and other iniquities. He, Merriman, would be powerless against all these things if he joined, but as an independent Government supporter he might buckle on his armour against them! "He is going to humbug us, I am sure," Merriman now and then told his intimates about Botha. What hurt him beyond measure was the apostasy of two of his colleagues in the Cape ministry, and the supposed party manœuvres for the purpose of keeping him out of the Assembly.

The septuagenarian's annoyance was not permanent. As early as June 14, 1910, Botha made a speech at Pretoria in which he told the public all about his relations with Jameson. As to the caucus, that was taken over by the Union Assembly, which moreover falsified the national illusions regarding reduction of expenditure. For many a year after 1910 Merriman continued to take his seat as a humble musket-bearer—his own term—in support of Botha's premiership. The time even came when he became reconciled with the attitude taken up by Sir D. Graaff and F. S. Malan, who openly showed their preference for Botha's leadership.

Wrongly, it has been asserted that Botha was nominated for his new position by a majority of members of the pre-Union Cabinets, and that the two Ministers mentioned tipped the beam against Merriman. What they did do was by their advice to facilitate Lord Gladstone's decision. They were, for the matter of that, under no obligation to

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shout from the housetops that they would refuse to serve under any premier except Merriman, as the latter apparently expected them to do.

The Government had but a small majority in the House, and it is questionable whether Merriman would have been able to keep it together. Botha's tact soon led to the 'independent' members from Natal joining his party, thus consolidating the Government's position. Nor was it long before Merriman publicly recanted the lack of appreciation for his rival. His conversion began when General Hertzog commenced to show that his allegiance was wandering; it became complete during the first stage of the Great War. The difficult days through which South Africa then passed induced Merriman to proclaim loudly and repeatedly that Botha was "the only man" who could, and did, keep the Union on the right track. Those were the days, too, when the old friendship between Merriman and Steyn ceased.

In connexion with Merriman's 1910 criticisms of Botha's policy, the tendency to look down on Transvaal men and methods was pretty strong at the time, not merely at Bloemfontein but at Capetown, where public affairs were far from being so involved as at Pretoria.

Steyn regretted Merriman's refusal to join the Botha Cabinet, yet could enter into his motives. On May 25, 1910, he wrote the disgruntled 'grand old man' the following letter of condolence:

> My own feeling I can best express in the Dutch word *hartseer* (soreness). I cannot bear the idea that the first ministry should be formed without you, and yet though regretting your decision, I can understand and appreciate the reasons. I had so hoped that you would have placed South Africa's finances on a sound basis, for they require it badly. I am not at least surprised at the course events have taken, because from the moment that we arrived in London, I felt that the whole Imperial influence was thrown in the one scale. Of one thing you can be assured, that though you are not in the ministry, you are in the hearts of all true South Africans, who love straightforward, honest, and clean statesmanship.

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It is striking to notice here Steyn's implied disapproval of Botha's statesmanship, seeing that South Africa owed it to Botha, and to no one else, that within eight years of Vereeniging the old permanent *mêlée* gave way to an autonomous Union. Steyn was apt to reproach others with forgetting so easily—he himself occasionally displayed this human weakness. Within less than two years from the date of this letter, Steyn's *protégé*, Hertzog, began to agitate openly against "Imperial influence"; on Merriman dissenting, he irretrievably got into Steyn's bad books.

In the beginning the "support from outside," foreshadowed in Merriman's letter, remained problematical. From the very first he attempted to maintain his influence in the Cape. An Administrator had to be appointed for each of the four Provinces in order to carry out the Constitution. Botha laid it down that the Ministers from each Province should jointly recommend someone for appointment. Four Cape Ministers sat in the first Union Cabinet, two of whom favoured a pro-Botha candidate, while the other two supported a well-known pro-Merriman politician. The four had to visit Pretoria at the end of May, for the swearing-in ceremony. During the journey they tried to arrive at a unanimous choice, but one of the Merrimanites indicated that he for one would not take the oath as a Minister, unless his man were selected. F. S. Malan, one of the Bothaites, thereupon made his headstrong colleague understand that this would mean the latter's exclusion from the Cabinet. That clinched the matter: the Botha candidate was recommended unanimously, and both Merrimanites joined the Cabinet. There is no doubt that this earnest of Botha's determination to be the undisputed master in his own house irritated Merriman and his followers.

With his small retinue of faithful henchmen Merriman often harried the Government. When the extensive Hartebeestpoort (Transvaal) irrigation scheme came before the Assembly, the Merriman group opposed so persistently that Botha had to threaten resignation in order to maintain

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unity in his party on matters of State policy. Once, after an unusually virulent criticism in the Assembly by Merriman of some Government action, Botha pointedly invited those on his side of the House who had lost confidence in the Cabinet to cross the floor. Merriman, in the course of years, admitted that Botha's premiership had best served the national interest; by degrees his attitude in Parliament lost its harshness. Usually, his birthday came during the Session; when the Prime Minister rose, in order—by way of exception in the Legislature—to congratulate the Father of the House in felicitous terms, all those present recognized the sincerity of the tribute. Merriman's criticisms always were straight from the shoulder; he never hesitated to air either his views or prejudices. Frequently he upset Botha by his indiscretions, but he never lost the Prime Minister's esteem.

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XXV

BOTHA'S POLITICAL SCHOOL

GRANTED that history is determined by topographical features, it cannot be overlooked that variety of geological phenomena, too, has had its share in affecting biological evolution, *i.e.*, the difference in character—and therefore the political temperament—of the population. The formation of South Africa's soil assists us in an understanding of its history, and even in prognosticating the future.

In this connexion it is interesting to note the precariousness of Transvaal–Free State relations ever since the babyhood of both countries. Mutual estrangement and heartfelt fraternizing were forever alternating. How is such a switchback course to be explained? With the aid of geology? Whoever studies the results of the Union's geological survey must be struck by the sharp contrast between the two Provinces.

The Free State is an integral part of the extensive Karroo system, which occupies a large portion of the Cape Province. The western Free State belongs to the Ecca series of that system; its eastern districts form part of the Beaufort series, while a narrow strip on the Basuto border fits into the Stormberg series—all of them Karroo formation.

The Transvaal is radically different. Its geological map looks like nothing so much as a patchwork quilt or, rather, a wildly futuristic daub. Experts distinguish, in addition to the Pretoria series and the related dolomite measures, the Witwatersrand sandstone conglomerate, enclosed by the Ventersdorp and Waterberg systems, the whole variegated by independent rock, such as the Pilandsberg crater and the Norite complexes.

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The contrast between the uniform structure as found in the Free State and the complexity of Transvaal geology supplies the key to the difference in mineral resources as well as in social and political habits of thought. The Free State is made up of a fairly homogeneous, sedentary steppe zone. The Transvaal, on the other hand, consists of the High Veld, Bush Veld, Springbok Flats, Middle Veld, and Low Veld, each with its own climate, its flora, fauna, and corresponding conditions of mankind. The Free State metamorphosis from an antelope paradise into a tame sheep run was soon accomplished. The Transvaal, on the contrary, for a long time remained an *Ultima Thule* for peripatetic hunters and nomadic prospectors, as well as a mere experimental guinea-pig in the realm of agriculture. South of the Vaal River, farmers were among the early exporters of wool; on the northern side, ivory and other trophies of the big-game hunters were a stand-by for many years. Gold followed.

Having lost the turbulent Griqualand West diamond-fields, the Free State found it easy to develop into a democratic model State. Law, order, and prosperity were its goal. The Government was drilled into an obedient instrument of popular feeling. The Transvaal from the very beginning attracted a heterogeneous crowd that required at brief intervals the autocratic rule of strong men. Its people tarried in the—to many outsiders inferior—pioneer stage long after Free Staters had settled down to the respectable colonist type. A patriarchal form of parliamentary government suited the southern Republic, where the electorate bossed up its rulers, who were regarded as no more than superior officials.

Hence punctilious compliance with current views and prejudices, as cultivated by the average Free Stater, was an indispensable factor in the success of any public man, down South. 'Individual' politics seemed anti-democratic, and offended the multitude. Abraham Fischer, universally esteemed and trusted as a leader, nevertheless received a vote of no-confidence in his constituency at the end of his

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long career. This was owing to his attitude in the 1912 Cabinet crisis; the split between the old statesman—whose great merits were fully recognized—and his whilom supporters was (as regarded by Free Staters) a blot on the escutcheon, and a humiliation, for . . . the superior person who had ventured to assert his own conception of national affairs, as against the opinions that happened to prevail among his constituents!

When shortly before the Rebellion of 1914 the whole of South Africa was holding its breath, waiting for President Steyn to speak, that gentleman wrote to Merriman:

> My own position is an awkward one. I cannot go about, meeting and addressing the people. All I can do is to use my influence quietly but, I hope, effectively. This I do not want to undo by newspaper polemics, before the time has arrived.

This characteristic anxiety for the preservation of influence was shared in those days by General Hertzog, who never forgot to consider what could either adversely affect or improve his own position.

"*Siamese Twins.*"—In the Transvaal strong individuality was a *sine qua non* in a leader, in order to distil from such a capricious set of people an adequate dose of public opinion or, if necessary, to flout it! Despite these Transvaal–Free State contrasts, President Steyn used to call them "Siamese twins," and President Kruger, so it is alleged, aspired to the "emptying of Vaal River," which forms the boundary between the two territories. Both Republics had, though differing in political method, subconsciously carried on an identical existence; their political ideals coalesced. The national soul continually pressed for harmony; the human element often caused divergence and distrust.

In 1865, during the Basuto trouble in the Free State, Kruger wrote to his Executive: "If possible, I wish to go and help the Free Staters." And so he did. Again, when the Transvaalers were in danger, at the end of last century, the world witnessed a unique instance of faith being kept, by the Free State allies. The absence of a

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really intimate affinity between the two national families may be due to the totally different geological formations in their respective countries, leading to their biological idiosyncrasies.

And it is this antinom which forms the background against which the Botha-Hertzog dispute was fought out. Although General Hertzog was born in Cape Colony, and Botha had settled north of Vaal River *via* Natal, the Free State and the New Republic each embodied respectively the Free State and Transvaal mentality. It is only natural that a strong spirit of dormant ill-will against enforced annexation to the Empire had remained alive among Afrikanders in the ex-Republics. Whilst Free State leaders prided themselves on being in tune with this spirit, Botha's political school in the Transvaal did its best to confer on the events of the last few years a deeper significance. It brought to the whole of South Africa a new—and therefore, to many, a not only unintelligible but insidious—gospel of lasting peace among the white races.

It is true that both sections originally found it difficult to reconcile such teachings with their racial instincts

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XXVI

BOTHA AND PRESIDENT STEYN

PRESIDENT STEYN—the former head of the Free State Government, well deserving the honour, continued to be so called until the day of his death—was five years older than Botha. His early days were spent at and near Bloemfontein. It is not likely that they knew each other in their youth, or that Botha, as is alleged, should have visited the Free State President in 1899. The story goes that the Transvaal Volksraad member made a personal attempt to induce Steyn to do all he could in order to ward off war with England. They became acquainted during Steyn's State visits to Pretoria, shortly before the war, and again met after the occupation of Bloemfontein. During the war, as well as during the period of national reconstruction, they jointly attended many deliberations. He being outspoken with me in expressing his estimate of others, I know how Botha consistently respected Steyn, both personally and for his political achievements, not as a matter of calculation but as the outcome of spontaneous admiration. Steyn's absolutist conditions regarding the justification of wars of independence in general, and of the Boer war in particular, strongly differed from Botha's military views. As with the most famous soldiers in history, he believed in war only so long as a reasonable fighting chance remained.

It was an inestimable advantage to South Africa to possess two leaders with such varying characteristics during the Boer war. The very contrast explains why Botha, with his susceptible nature, conceived a lasting devotion for the other, who, however, did not reciprocate that affection. Steyn's querulousness prevented him from entering into Botha's political motives, which to him were

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complicated, or rather inaccessible. Steyn was unable to get over his resentment at the result of the long Anglo-Boer conflict, which to him seemed irretrievably tragic. Post-war conditions always appeared to him in the light of the period of suffering prior to 1902. The bulk of his compatriots were, at first, like him in this, groping their way amidst the darkling shadows of the past rather than fixing their eyes on the bright spots that beckoned in the future.

Strikingly this mood emerges in a letter from Steyn to Merriman, written on June 4, 1911, in connexion with the appearance of General Sir W. Butler's autobiography: "I still find it very painful to read books, or even articles, that remind me of the war. Some people seem able to forget easily!"

Botha's post-war way of looking at things was startlingly original, almost offensively so, and thus created suspicion together with annoyance, as all attitudes do that fail to conform to conventional ideas. His policy therefore was rejected as unnational and unpatriotic by many. The more it became apparent how seriously he took his conciliation doctrine, the more—originally—he was destined to feel his isolation among his fellows. Many regarded him as a fool or, worse, a rogue. His memory retained its vigour, but he deliberately obliterated his painful recollections of the war, for he wanted to re-create the South Africa that came after Vereeniging. In this endeavour he had to do without Steyn's assistance. Many a family in the former Boer States for years included in its evening devotions a fervent prayer for the restoration of the republican order of things.

Where Division Began.—On Steyn's return from Europe in 1905 he found Botha immersed in political affairs, seeking contact with the well-disposed members of the British community. The Transvaal Boer Premier's work two years later caused the Free State leader heartfelt joy. This was destined to be short-lived. The Cullinan diamond, General Smuts' Education Act, and a host of intangible factors—who can plumb the depths of the human soul?—

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marred Steyn's good impression. Even Afrikanders who were sympathetic to the gospel of conciliation sometimes felt that the indulgent yielding was consistently overdone! Among the Dutch at the Convention symptoms of division appeared; Botha called them "fairly deep-seated," and they arose from radically different views on the Anglo-Boer problem, *i.e.*, they were affected by imperial relationships, among other issues. The fact that Steyn for reasons of health was forced to abandon any ambition of becoming the Union's premier increased his numerous grievances, real and imaginary, against Botha. One has only to remember Botha's "objectionable intimacy" with Jameson, or the aggravating circumstance that Free Staters received their constitution fully six months later than Transvaalers, who had gone to some trouble to obtain theirs!

The deeply rooted divergence of temperament and outlook had already begun to manifest itself at Klerksdorp and Vereeniging in 1902. Twelve years later it culminated in an outburst, the traces of which can only gradually disappear. In 1910 the Free Staters looked upon themselves as 'National' *par excellence*. They made no secret of their Merriman preference and reluctantly accepted Botha's lead when the heavy burden of a unified administration had been laid on him. Although Fischer and Hertzog openly showed their scant sympathy with Botha's politics, it was a matter of course to them that they had to sit in his Cabinet: it was the price for the support expected by that Cabinet from the sixteen Free State M.L.A.'s. The extent of its practical value was soon to be demonstrated. One may well ask whether there ever was any real unity in the Government party, inaugurated at Bloemfontein in 1911 amid such a grand pyrotechnic display of oratory.

The ambition of Free State politicians kept alive their opinion to the effect that their Province was predestined to shape the course of South African history, through its Members of Parliament and Ministers. Theirs was to be the tail wagging the dog. When Steyn died the Rev. Mr Kestell with evident gusto boasted that "the Free State was

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the President's all-in-all. The whole of South Africa found a place in his heart, but the Free State came first." As time progressed, Botha became less exclusive, and he may justly be regarded as the prototype of the ideal South African. With enviable forbearance Botha bore Steyn's peevishness and even opposition. Perhaps he never fully realized how strongly Steyn was inclined to fault-finding.

Since the middle of 1910, when Merriman's obstruction began to annoy Botha, relations between himself and his equally self-opinionated Cape rival were never anything but formal. Steyn, too, no longer loyally supported him in 1910, but in spite of this Botha remained in constant touch with Steyn, either requesting advice or giving information.

Among politicians to ask for, or to give, advice usually is an empty show, deceiving no one. Repeatedly Botha saw Steyn's lack of sympathy; nevertheless, he always felt obliged to justify his policy with the President, of all people. He continued to recognize the sturdy Free Stater as a real factor in the evolution of our political life. In 1910 Steyn wrote to a Natal politician, pointing out that it will not do to suggest a policy, for the carrying out of which someone else is to be held responsible. In reality Steyn never ceased to interfere in national affairs. Botha, without ever knowing it, had become his *bête noire*.

The Botha-Steyn Conflict.—The first clash left no scars (the reference is to Steyn's support of Merriman as Premier). The second conflict—on the Hertzog crisis—left Botha regretful and, temporarily, aggrieved. He supposed, however, that the flaring up of the quarrel—which had so long been smouldering—must have come as a surprise to Steyn. They bombarded each other with long, circumstantial epistles on the crisis—naturally without the one convincing the other. In one of his last letters to Steyn Botha says:

"I have suffered much during the past few months. You, too, feel deeply. Possibly you can imagine more or less what I have had to go through. That, however, the day has come when I have to say to you (in my eyes the

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greatest contemporary Afrikander, and at the same time my beloved friend), 'Thy ways are not my ways' is so painful an experience that I never dreamt it would occur during my political career. It is my deepest sorrow since the day when the independence of my country had to be surrendered."

The corresponding fragment in Steyn's reply reads:

> With you, General, I have gone through deep waters. I have had nothing but affection and friendship from you. It is for this reason that the strife between you and General Hertzog, both of whom I esteem so highly, grieves me so much.

It may well be asked whether Steyn's timely intervention might not have avoided the breach. It would, however, be unfair to leave out of account the broken health of the hermit of Onze Rust, Steyn's homestead near the Free State capital. He never was a thorough-going supporter of the Botha policy, even though he did not hesitate to pose as one in public.

When Botha for the third time had to do without Steyn's support at a most difficult period, surprise could not count as an excuse. It was known at Pretoria that Steyn wanted to keep South Africa out of the threatening World War, although legitimate doubts as to the practicability of this aspiration existed. Early in August 1914, when British South Africa became a belligerent owing to England entering the lists against the Central Powers, General Smuts paid a visit to the President in order to explain matters to him. Mr N. J. de Wet, Minister of Justice, followed a few weeks later. Owing to the Maritz betrayal, and increasing ferment both in the Transvaal and the Northern Free State, martial law had to be proclaimed. Notwithstanding this, Steyn approved of the meetings of protest against the South-west campaign, convened by Generals Beyers and de Wet; he used the "safety-valve" argument.

He was living in comparative isolation; he had great physical difficulty in moving, and sometimes he could hardly talk. No improvement in his vital functions was

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noticeable since his medical adviser had, in 1909, dissuaded him from all professional political activity. His intellect was not affected, but his physical weakness, which sometimes assumed the proportions of paralysis, stood in the way of immediate and sound conclusions on which to act. Thus he was incapacitated from keeping in touch with the course of events. His biographer records that the final Botha-Hertzog breach in December 1912 (long expected by some people) came on him as a bolt from the blue. In 1914, Steyn himself tells us, "I first heard of the rebellion in the Free State as an accomplished fact." At the time, civil war was in full swing! During a critical period of our history, more was demanded of his mental powers than he was able to give.

Botha's S.O.S.—Immediately after the treason committed on the German border on October 11, 1914, the Prime Minister wired to Steyn, mentioning the impending proclamation of martial law, which would be accompanied by commandeering in places. The telegram concluded: "A word from you will go far." The sudden request for aid is only explicable by the speed with which Botha in those days of suspense had to act. This prevented him from approaching Steyn in his usual tactful manner. He hit on the wrong moment in Steyn's political moods, for it so happened that in those days the President preferred to use his influence "in a quiet way."

This quietude was the very thing Botha did not want. It may be questioned whether Steyn adequately recognized the strategic importance of the Windhoek wireless station as a potent instrument of war. In its time it had an exceptionally wide range, thus raising the German South-west Protectorate to a key position in overseas warfare and a danger to the Union. Putting an end to that position could therefore be considered a defensive as well as an offensive measure. Steyn had had no opportunity of noting that the Prime Minister had been reluctant to enter upon the South-west campaign. Botha had to choose between seeing the territory occupied by Australians

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(added to which the British section in South Africa would have resented his abstention) and conquering it himself, in which case he would incur the enmity of part of the Afrikanders!

As a matter of fact, Botha's urgent telegraphic appeal to Onze Rust was needless, being founded on an overestimate of the prestige enjoyed by a man who was respected as even Steyn was. Crises will come in a nation's life when wise words of persuasion, by whomsoever uttered, remain unheeded by many. Just as the pastoral exhortation, issued simultaneously by the Dutch Reformed Church, had but little effect on the multitude (which had become hysterical), the President would not have been listened to by General de Wet and his followers had he urged them to obey their Parliament and their Government and their own laws.

Steyn's reply to Botha's S.O.S. was to the effect that, if he addressed his people, he would have to advise against the South-west expedition; hence, he preferred to remain silent, all the more so "because I have not yet regained strength, and am already experiencing the ill-effects of the terrible times in which we are living." He had "hoped to be able to stand aside from the present conflict," and promised not to do anything that might render the Premier's position more difficult—nothing less, nothing more. He sent his son to Pretoria to hand over the letter. Shortly afterward father and son both tried to influence Beyers and de Wet in the direction of peace, but in vain: the psychological moment was past. General de Wet avoided all contact with the father of his people at Onze Rust.

Can it be that Botha afterward realized that his appeal had been too impulsive? Or did he consider it his duty, at the hour of national peril, to force the President to show his hand? However this may be, at Steyn's grave (a few years later) he gave expression to a sorrow that was undoubtedly intense as well as sincere. In his heart not a vestige of reproach or sense of estrangement remained. And now a second question arises: Did Steyn ever understand that,

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though he might have published his objection to the Windhoek campaign, his duty to himself and his people nevertheless obliged him to point out that a formal resolution of Parliament, embodying the national will, demanded unconditional obedience? At the great S.A.P. Congress, held at Bloemfontein in 1911, Steyn referred to the "hungry European nations, stretching out their grasping hands to parts of Southern Africa. We must be prepared for their energy." During the Rebellion he dictated a passage illustrating his past concern at South Africa's condition:

> In case the threatened Anglo-German war breaks out, I understood that, if we remained apart as separate colonies, the state of affairs might easily lead to serious consequences.

This can only mean that Steyn, fearing that one Colony might be pro-British and the other pro-German, worked with all his strength for the establishment of a central authority invested with the legal power to lay down a policy to the whole of the country in case of war, to be respected by all alike. If this is the correct view, it is difficult to follow Steyn, when he quotes "the consternation among many of our people"—these are his words—as an excuse for an armed protest against "an Assembly resolution, ratifying by a large majority the Government's policy"—his own words once more.

The central authority of Parliament, called into being with the aid of Steyn himself, was not merely ignored, but flouted by him, at the very moment when civil war—which he dreaded so much—threatened South Africa, rendering obedience to the constitutional order an urgent necessity. Rightly Botha, in his correspondence with Onze Rust, drew Steyn's attention to the flagrant wrong committed in condoning active resistance to the Government's measures by the excuse that the recalcitrants would have preferred other steps! There were, at the time, people sufficiently muddled to shout loudly that the Government should resign, in order that a general election might decide! Steyn's amazing inconsistency can be explained only by his

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exhausted physique fatally affecting his otherwise normal intelligence.

End of the Steyn-Merriman Friendship.—How strongly the outbreak of the Great War disturbed people's minds in South Africa is proved by the sudden and complete break in the amicable relations of many years' standing between Steyn and Merriman. Toward the end of September 1914 the latter ventilated an opinion on the causes of the Boer war that proved so objectionable to Steyn that the reply put an end to any further exchange of thoughts. In 1910 he had estimated Merriman's administrative talents higher than Botha's—four years later the Cape politician, too, incurred the irrevocable displeasure of Onze Rust. It is insight into this general disruption of even social intercourse between leading South Africans that aids comprehension of the extremely awkward situation with which Botha had to contend. General Smuts subsequently described it as follows:

> Days there were when the Rebellion took on such a dangerous aspect that the Government no longer knew whether it was standing on its head or on its heels.

Those who care to visualize the real depth of the anti-campaign movement in the Union, which reached its height in the civil war, will learn much from the following figures, indicating the result of the General Election of 1915; thanks to the intensity of the passions then aroused it supplied a correct image, more so than any other election, of the relative strength of the Union's deepest feelings. 77,000 votes were cast for Nationalist candidates, 95,000 for S.A.P. men, and 65,000 for Unionists.

At Steyn's death, in November 1916, Botha paid his tribute at the graveside as a personal friend rather than as Prime Minister. His words in praising the exceptional merits of the great Free Stater were: "During the Boer war he was the soul of everything; his figure will continue to inspire the people by his noble example for all time."

In the autograph manuscript of the funeral oration

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Botha calls himself "cast down with grief," and Steyn "the father of the Convention; one of the creators of Union." At a time when Botha had become unsympathetic to Steyn, the former—in March 1910, when Bloemfontein had resolved on throwing its weight into the scale on Merriman's behalf and turning its back on the other "Siamese twin"—wrote to the President: "Sometimes, when troubles threaten to overwhelm me, it is a great relief to me to unbosom myself to you." A year later: "President, no one in South Africa to-day can advise us more collectedly or soundly than you can."

How are we to explain the contrast? Was it Botha's unconscious endeavour—inspired by exaggerated deference to a colleague, five years his senior and destined to the highest office of State, but broken by illness—to reconcile Steyn to his, Botha's, own prominent position? Was Steyn, just as unconsciously, devoured by a silent, gnawing pain at Botha's rapid promotion to be arbiter of South Africa's fate, so that he was inclined to confine his attention to Botha's alleged mistakes?

Quién sabe?

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XXVII

BOTHA'S FIRST UNION CABINET

THE South Africa Act was to be a gift by the British Parliament; it was therefore practically a matter of course that the National Convention should have preferred the English style of party government, for our new organism, to the Boer Republican model, which suited our country better. The Executive as well as the Legislature was, in republican times, the direct product of the polls, functioning independently, both of them under the constant supervision of the electorate. When Botha, in May 1910, was called upon to form a Government for the time being, subject to the verdict of the electorate, he was not free to select whom he liked. He felt bound by his promises—in connexion with the rejection of the Jameson scheme—to recruit his colleagues from the four existing ministries. The best Minister, he once said to me, is the man you have to go down on your knees to, asking him please to sacrifice his personal interests on the altar of the nation's welfare—not he who insists on being invited, or who is forced on you by third parties, by reason of his alleged services, or alternatively as the price to be paid for the influence he is presumed to exercise.

In order to lend a constitutional basis to the provisional Botha *régime* a majority of partisans had to be got into the Assembly. For that purpose a popular platform required to be constructed, and a number of Ministers who would appeal to the popular taste selected in a bit of a hurry. Botha did not carry out his original intention of appointing in the first instance but six, instead of nine, colleagues (as provided in the Constitution), because the three vacant portfolios would be sure to cause offence to over-ambitious politicians; and that in its turn would create trouble during the elections.

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In three of the Dominions (not in Natal) existing party divisions allowed a joint grouping for electoral purposes. From the Transvaal the Premier selected his indispensable lieutenant, General J. C. Smuts, who took no less than three portfolios, viz., the Interior, Mines, and Defence. Then there was Mr H. C. Hull, who represented the moderate British, and had shown his ability as a Treasurer. Cape Province had four Ministers. Mr F. S. Malan acted on behalf of the Afrikander Bond with authority and tact, and in the course of years became an ever more zealous supporter of the Botha policy. Sir David Graaff was among Ministers above all the man of affairs. Messrs Burton and Sauer were regarded as enriching the Cabinet with the excellent Merriman tradition. Natal was represented by Sir Frederick Moor—whose position among his fellow-colonists has already been elucidated—and the amiable Dr O'Grady Gubbins, Minister without portfolio. The Free State insisted on portfolios for Abraham Fischer and General Hertzog, the latter taking Justice.

These two were not exactly admirers of Botha's political antecedents or administrative methods; they were never towers of strength to the Cabinet. Opposition criticism on the composition of the Government as a whole may be condensed into Sir Drummond Chaplin's words at Germiston, in September 1910: it represented the countryside only, and it had dropped all those proposals which did not please the Hertzog section. Botha, Sir Drummond said, was busy putting on Hertzog's clothes.

"*Hertzogism.*"—The Minister who in 1910 was least presentable on election platforms was General Hertzog. In charge of Education in the Free State, he had become English-speaking South Africa's bogey-man, owing to his having made instruction in both official languages compulsory for all pupils in elementary schools. In the Free State Afrikaans was the home language of the great bulk of the people; they had no objection to their children being taught English. Among English-speaking Free Staters —and even more so in the other Dominions—there were

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many who suspected the compulsory character of the Hertzog Act; administrative incidents in connexion with its provisions led to agitation. The English-speaking section had expected the subjection of the Boer States to produce, among other salutary results (English), uni-lingualism for the whole of South Africa. After Vereeniging the language of the larger half of the population was prescribed in schools and Government offices throughout the sub-continent. The Transvaal Education Act, 1907, introduced by General Smuts, provided that every child would be taught in its home language, as the medium best suited to its instruction. Intelligent application of this principle gave universal satisfaction in the Transvaal, with its large British population.

In 1910 the English-speaking section—however greatly one may regret it—was so irritable on the subject of its children being taught Dutch that the slightest suspicion of compulsion caused red-hot indignation, reacting powerfully on the ordinary citizen's politics—and this on the eve of judgment having to be passed on the Botha Cabinet. Although less than twenty years have now passed since "Hertzogism" was an important, even critical, factor in our society, as the generator of ill-feeling and passion, it is hard to understand to-day how English-speaking South Africans could regard it as a humiliation that their offspring should be obliged to learn the other language.

Intended, without a doubt, as a boon to the Free State, and in theory perhaps an improvement on the Transvaal solution of the same problem, the Hertzog Act suddenly became a shibboleth that tore the abnormal nervous system of the South African nation to tatters. It should not be forgotten that, whereas the fathers of the Constitution accepted the absolute equality of both languages in all good faith, English-speaking South Africa never took the matter seriously. Bi-lingualism was regarded as a mere polite gesture toward the other section—neither more nor less. Educated Afrikanders put up with bi-lingualism as a necessary evil from which there was no escape. On the

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other hand, the average English-speaking South African of the period was inclined to regard every practical recognition of the Dutch language as a menace to the interests of those of his own race.

All this gave the figure of General Hertzog such prominence that President Steyn and other protagonists of "Hertzogism" would hardly have tolerated his exclusion from the Botha Cabinet. The neutrality of future Free State members of Parliament was foreshadowed in such a case, whereas on the other side of the account was the fact that if Hertzog were taken in a large number of English-speaking voters would secede. Unhesitatingly, Botha chose the second alternative. This meant not only the loss of several seats for his combined party, but also scant gratitude in the circles where "Hertzogism" was popular.

Botha did not lose any time in defining the following as his educational policy, Hertzog or no Hertzog: Equal rights for both languages, mother-tongue to be used as the medium, and no compulsion as to the second language. At the same time he refused to entertain the demand, frequently made in those days, that the Union Government should have the Free State Act repealed. In the end, the Government party got 66 out of 121 seats in the Assembly, the anti-Hertzogites capturing 44. About 148,000 votes were cast for Bothaites, as against 90,000 for all other candidates. It would have been a euphemism, however, to have spoken of a "Botha party," because shortly after the election Hertzog was secretly approached with the request to establish and lead a separate, anti-Botha, party. In 1910 Botha refused to let the Free State go; two years later the Free State let him go.

Botha's Defeat.—A couple of weeks after the construction of the Cabinet, Botha was nominated for Pretoria East. He opened an extensive campaign in that constituency with a speech promising equal treatment of all provinces. Scarcely amalgamated, the four ex-Colonies were already becoming jealous of one another with regard to favours

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conferred by the Government. Botha emphasized his policy of "conciliation, co-operation, mutual tolerance." We must prepare, he said, to recognize each other's traditions, history, languages. For the rest, he held that the time had now come for everyone to "take off his coat," *i.e.*, without delay work for his own personal as well as the general prosperity. "Platitudes," Merriman called all these things.

The General Election supplied but one sensation: Botha's own defeat in the constituency where he had lived during the last few years. He had spared neither platform energy nor individual persuasion in order to attract electors to his banner of freeing the white population from racialism. His ambition to win was sharpened by the fact that his opponent, Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, had centred his hopes on the "best-man government" feeling in the constituency. When the figures appeared, Botha was deeply disappointed. He had fought hard, and apart from his own personal defeat, the relatively small majority of his supposed supporters in the Assembly over all other combinations was not exactly encouraging. Just as Jameson, on realizing that his "best-men government" idea had to be jettisoned, suddenly lost his taste for politics, Botha experienced—almost at the same time—the temptation to resign the Premiership.

He was cast down by the fact that neither the atmosphere of goodwill in the Convention days nor the general satisfaction at South Africa's long-postponed unity was able permanently to affect the political outlook of his people. The desire to return to his favourite work as a stock-breeder, and only now and then to cut in as a counsellor, became particularly strong. As always, however, an irresistible sense of duty swayed him. The trend of recent events had not come up to his expectations by a long way. Not that he had ever indulged in millennial anticipations, but the thought that the progress made since Vereeniging might prove illusory was intolerable to him. He simply could not escape further sacrifices.

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During his premiership in Transvaal Botha had represented Standerton district at Pretoria; he now looked for another constituency, having replied to Sir Percy Fitzpatrick's teasing remarks that he would in no case return to his faithful Standertonians. Losberg district, to the east of Potchefstroom, then elected him for Parliament in Capetown. Although but forty-eight years old, he felt the effects of the continual tension, of which he, more than anyone else, was the victim. In November 1910 he left for Capetown, in order to attend the formal opening of Parliament by the Duke of Connaught. To Dr Bok, his devoted and talented secretary, he confessed that he had never faced a new departure with such a heavy heart. What would a little earlier perhaps have gladdened him as being a joyful occasion had become, now that it was within his grasp, nothing but a cause of embittered comment on the vexatious side of the statesman's profession.

To South Africa, however, he remained the leader above all others. The opinion of the well-known English publicist Basil Williams may be cited here. The impressions he formed of the Capetown festivities, as reproduced in the *Times*, were as follows:

> Unquestionably General Botha is South Africa's chosen leader. He has proved himself a gallant, a resourceful and a courteous captain, during three long years of war. Though he won no overwhelming victories, he was great as the embodiment of that slow tenacity which served the Boers so well. The habit of command, which he acquired in war, he has never since abandoned, and all who approach him acknowledge it to be his right. It is not that he is brilliant or has ever expressed strikingly original ideas. But he is a man of sound judgment and extraordinary tact in weighing the human element in a problem. He is a farmer, and has something of the slow finality that comes to the best farmers from watching the slow and sure processes of nature. He has also some of the defects of a man long accustomed to command; he is impatient of opposition, and is apt to take it with childish petulance as an insult against himself. As a parliamentary leader this will prove his chief weakness, for parliamentary criticism being still new to him, he is more inclined to circumvent than to meet it. Besides his petulance he has a vein of almost childlike simplicity.

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When a great work is done, as in the last Convention, he rejoices like a boy at play. Childlike is also his loyalty to friends and causes, and his inability to understand what seems disloyalty in others.

Apart from the fact that there had not been time or opportunity for the welding of related provincial party organizations into one compact group, there was hardly any cohesion among those members of the Assembly who had been elected to support the Botha Cabinet. They scarcely knew each other, and easily fell a prey to prejudice, suspicion, and jealousy—qualities that had flourished in the past particularly among Cape politicians, even those of the same party. It was not easy to get one of their Ministers to assist a colleague with words of sympathy at a time of trouble or attack. The leaders of the same group harmonized so poorly that they avoided personal intercourse, or secretly criticized each other. "Our own people are the most awful crew," Jameson stated on becoming Cape Premier in 1904. It was not only his adherents who deserved the reproach.

Meanwhile the Cape Parliament had been enjoying a certain reputation because of the punctilious emulation of Westminster precedents and the high level of its debates. Capetown frowned on steam-roller and caucus methods, such as had brought the Pretoria legislative machinery into disrepute! To this should be added that the Transvaal's economic importance had long predominated. By its huge gold output the Province had become an indispensable factor in the economics of the world. Transvaalers had learnt, better than others in South Africa, to set about the business of State intelligently and with proper despatch.

Intrigue.—The Union Assembly soon began to be a hotbed of intrigue. At the first caucus of the Government party, where the choice of a Speaker had to be decided upon, Botha proposed General Beyers, a Cape-born lawyer, who had distinguished himself as an able and brave Boer commander. At Vereeniging he had presided over the

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meeting of delegates, and since 1907 he had made an exemplary Transvaal Speaker. His candidature would probably have been cordially welcomed by the Opposition.

Merriman, however, moved Mr J. T. (now Sir James) Molteno, the argument being that, as the Transvaal had already supplied the leader of the House, viz., the Prime Minister, it would be better to take Mr Speaker from some other Province. In those days many people feared that the whole of South Africa would find its way into Botha's 'pocket'! Did not General Smuts control three Departments and Mr Hull the Treasury! There were politicians who, although not antagonistic to Botha, did not like the idea that the prominent individuals should all be taken from the Transvaal! Mr Molteno's knowledge of Dutch was inadequate, nor had he General Beyers' parliamentary experience and prestige. Cape members imagined that the Free Staters as well as the Transvaalers would support the latter candidate, thus ensuring a majority. Many of them, while recognizing the superiority of the qualifications possessed by Botha's candidate, did not want to abandon their old leader, Merriman. The unexpected happened. The Free Staters, seized by their passion for equilibrium between North and South, took Merriman's part in the caucus, thus depressing the scales of South Africa in favour of the South: Mr Molteno became the Government nominee for the Speakership.

While Merriman, six months previously, had attempted in vain to get one of his friends appointed Cape Administrator, he was now able to deal Botha an effective blow—thanks to the assistance of the Free Staters, which surprised many people—even before the new Parliament had been *de facto* constituted. The episode conveyed a plain warning to the Prime Minister as to the quality of support on which he might count in the Assembly. When Botha publicly moved in the House that Mr Molteno do occupy the Chair, Opposition members were so disgusted that they refused to have the motion seconded from their midst. Without any doubt, the non-election of General Beyers had serious

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consequences for South Africa. Having been appointed Commandant-General at a later stage, he resigned his post in dramatic circumstances, shortly after the outbreak of the Great War.

The immediate significance of the Molteno incident was that the Government had to take into account the Merriman faction which, supported by the Free Staters, was only too much inclined to act the part of Opposition. While Botha was aspiring to the Union premiership, President Steyn—together with Abraham Fischer and General Hertzog—strengthened Merriman's candidature. The fact of General Beyers being less welcome than Mr Molteno was due to Transvaal recommendation. Anti-Botha tendency among Free State leaders has dominated our political history for years.

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XXVIII

BOTHA AND THE DUTCH LANGUAGE

SOME years after Union the question was asked whether South Africa was ripe for it when it came. Leading politicians at the time were not pessimistic, so that eight years after Vereeniging the country was able to indulge in the most delightful of all surprises: jubilation at its own unexpected good fortune. The more closely they approached the day for its materialization, however, the more keenly did many people feel the disillusion that is the aftermath of every rhapsody. The Dutch-speaking section had come into its own in South African affairs by purely constitutional means. In theory, therefore, every cause of friction with the other portion of the population had been removed. Not so in actual practice. Discord remained.

The rapid triumph of the Afrikander, due to Botha's political strategy and peaceful propaganda for conciliation more than to any other cause, inspired his compatriots, especially the younger set. These were galvanized into a frenzy of nationalism, of which turbulent haste and enthusiastic self-consciousness were powerful ingredients. Ordinarily, literary-social revival precedes national-political renaissance. In this instance the sequence was reversed; this fact did not affect either the timeliness or the usefulness of the movement. The quantity of scientific and artistic talent, suddenly produced by the Afrikander element, was astonishing.

Ever since the defeat of 1902 this element felt the ignominy, linguistically as well as otherwise, of having to 'crawl' before the British domination. The Transvaal soon had its energetic leaders, who looked after the interests of their Dutch-speaking countrymen, protecting by the well-knit "C.N.O." organization the conquered popula-

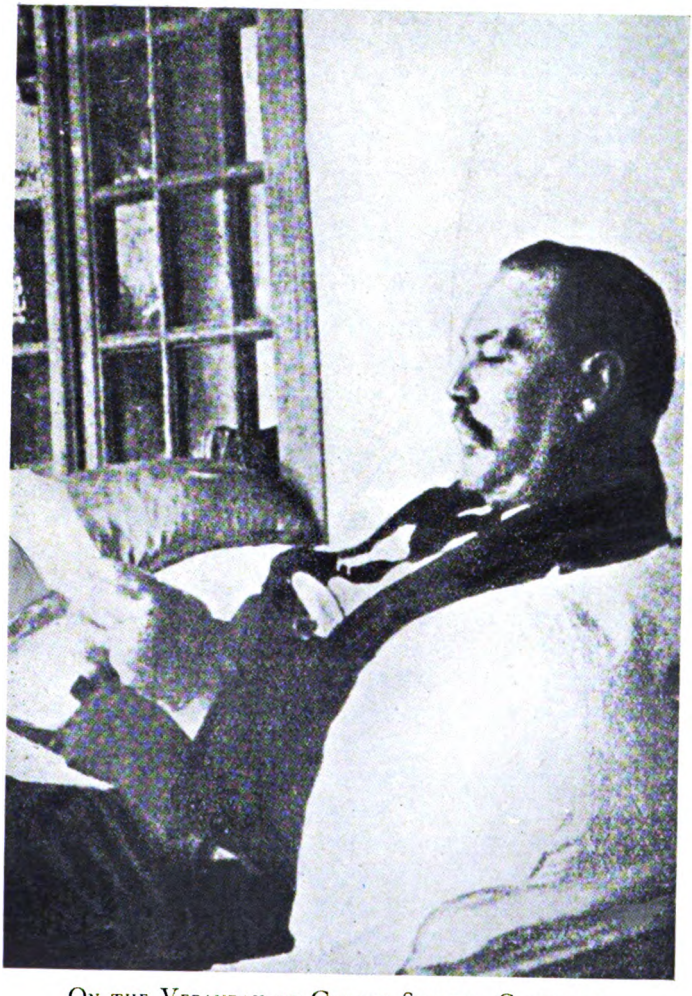
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tion's language rights. Under the Vereeniging Treaty, the Afrikander's language was barely tolerated. Clause five provided that Dutch was to be taught at public schools in the Transvaal and Orange River Colony wherever the parents might demand it; its use would be permitted in Courts of Law in so far as might be necessary for the better and more efficient administration of justice. Five years afterward the Transvaal Education Act put English and Dutch on a completely equal footing as mediums of instruction. Ultimately, Clause 137 of the South Africa Act established perfect equality in every respect, placing the Union permanently in the ranks of those interesting, though not uniformly enviable, countries whose system is a bi-lingual one.

The Dutch, who had heartily applauded this forward movement, rightly insisted that the opportunity should be utilized to the fullest extent. Ambitious, well-meaning zealots stood up for those who considered the achieved progress over-slow. It was they who reproached the Government with lack of sympathy for the inspiring cultural renaissance, especially the language movement. Was it a just reproach? As far as the bureaucracy was concerned, it was. Time and again, civil servants had to be spurred; it was the labour of a Sisyphus to goad them into cultivating at least that modicum of sympathy which would make them render bare justice. The uninformed language enthusiast, however, did not realize what it involved to apply the new 1910 ideas with the Milner inheritance of officialdom as instrument! The amalgamation of four existing administrations absorbed ministerial attention to begin with. Officialdom, to which the gradual organization of Union departments had been entrusted, would not permit of the immediate and draconic application of Clause 137!

"*Great Sacrifices!*"—Nothing could be more unjust than to accuse Botha of indifference toward his mother-tongue. When, in May 1902, five leading Afrikanders negotiated peace terms, Botha was the man who claimed from Lord

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ON THE VERANDAH OF GROOTE SCHUUR, CAPETOWN

This photograph was taken shortly after Botha became Union Premier, in 1910. He was then nearly fifty years old.

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Milner a Dutch version of the draft treaty. Who was the first to raise the national banner after 1902?

On February 8, 1904, a large concourse met in the north-east part of the Free State for the reinterment of General Philip R. Botha, who was an elder brother of Botha and a trusty lieutenant of de Wet. He met his death after having been severely wounded on the battlefield. Botha made a speech, reported in the Press, exhorting his hearers to observe "loyalty toward our language, our Church, our customs."

"An Afrikander," he continued, "who neglects his language is an enemy, not only of his people but of himself. Let us learn English; let the English learn Dutch—that will increase the chances of our forming one great nation. I beseech you, make great sacrifices for your language and education."

Three months afterward, when the political rebirth of his people was initiated by the formation of Het Volk, Botha said:

"Though we lost our independence, the nation survives. We fail to see, at present, why so much blood should have been spilled, but the God of our fathers does not slumber. In His own day it will all become plain to us. Meanwhile, let us show our new Government that we are a civilized people, and, while obeying it, hold fast before all things to our nationality and our own tongue."

Approximately five years later Steyn's dictum was: "The language of the conqueror in the mouth of the conquered is the language of a slave." The contrast between the two ways of putting the question is characteristic: Botha's words are conciliatory; Steyn is defiant. Botha used every opportunity of reminding Lord Milner that he should keep his promise of satisfactorily maintaining the Dutch language in education. As soon as unification had become practical politics, Botha assured Steyn (June 1908) of his support for equal language rights at the ensuing Convention. He did not neglect to move the Cape Government in the same direction, and it was he who created the

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exceptional atmosphere without which Clause 137 of the South Africa Act would never have come about.

Almost invariably his public speeches and official communications were made in Dutch. Only a few, not very happy, exceptions are on record. In his private circle, too, he used his mother-tongue. As regards the systematic use of Afrikaans, most of the intellectuals heading the language movement were not in advance of him. He had to yield to the majority of them when it came to a thorough knowledge of English. During his first term of office (1907) his political opponents openly derided the Prime Minister's English; the Johannesburg Press attributed his comparative reserve in the Assembly to his slight linguistic attainments. This always remained the same. Lord Buxton tells us: "Botha and I always, of course, talked in English. His unfamiliarity with the English language and with its idioms gave a graphic turn to common expression."

Botha knew that he could not be sure of his English; when, on occasion, he was forced to speak in it he read from manuscript, which usually lost him a good deal of the effect aimed at. His loyalty to Dutch was grounded in necessity —not in academic abstraction. It was sober sense, not fanaticism, that explained his uni-lingualism in public. He was able, however, to apply that fine, vigorous handwriting of his to good High-Dutch and racy Afrikaans.

Not a Language Fanatic.—The political aspect of the language question hardly appealed to Botha. He always preferred the "more haste, less speed" standpoint in such matters; it suited his antipathy to anything that might fan the racial flame. The language fanatic he feared just as much as he did the jingo in general. He was completely oblivious to the damage incurred by his prestige as Premier by the action of civil servants who, either owing to lack of judgment or deliberately, ignored the existence of Clause 137, in a direction detrimental to the Dutch community. When income-tax was first levied, circulars were sent out in English only; the countryside bombarded the Government with complaints, owing to the inability of the farmers

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to follow the complicated directions by the Treasury. I tried to bring it home to him that the head of the department concerned was irritating many voters, and should at the very least be reprimanded. My representations, however, made but a faint impression on him.

Once, after a visit to Rusthof, he and I were waiting on the station platform where an official placard told farmers how to be successful as mealie farmers. It was printed in English only, although the district was practically Dutch-speaking to a man. "Did you notice, General?" I exclaimed, naturally surprised. "Ay," he replied, "the Department of Agriculture is really doing good work." He completely missed my point. Where his ministerial instructions would have been instrumental in waking up a wrong-headed, innately conservative bureaucracy, teaching it the urgency of treating both official languages on a basis of equality, Botha eliminated Government action; the public, he seemed to think, had better act as constable in such cases. When the Dutch Press protested vigorously, and published numerous instances of the official neglect of Clause 137, under the heading of "The Lame Donkey again!" Botha could only stigmatize these as undeserved reproaches; the Government, he thought, could surely not be held responsible for the slackness or the refractoriness of its Civil Service!

Nor did he take much notice of the economic aspect. The special claims of applicants for the public service who either commanded both languages, or were determined to acquire them, implied an interpretation of Clause 137 that Botha was not prepared to make his own without further ado. He preferred to leave all such matters to the slow process of gradual recognition by the British section. Be it remembered that the latter's 1910 mood, as regards language, was identical with that of 1908, when Hertzogism had caused a panic. Bit by bit in the course of years their native timidity diminished.

People who insisted on mechanical equality, without being acquainted with office routine, easily got excited,

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intensifying discontent by their cavilling. During the Rebellion General de Wet was given a safe conduct to President Steyn which, owing to the stupidity of some subordinate official, had been made out in English. This ruffled his temper to such an extent that he found in it a welcome excuse for his refusal to go to Onze Rust. Equally well known is the case of the railway official who detained a parcel addressed "Kaapstad" (Capetown), because he recognized "no such station."

Premier and Student.—We get a clear insight into the position taken up by Botha on the language question from his correspondence with a Stellenbosch student on a demonstration, organized early in 1913 in honour of Clause 137. The student—afterward the Rev. Dr N. J. v. d. Merwe, M.L.A., the talented biographer of his father-in-law, President Steyn—published a letter in which he made the following reproach:

> We felt that you were not inclined to encourage the nascent enthusiasm for our own language, and our own people, among the youth of the country. Instead of inspiring it to life, you were busy administering a sleeping-draught to your people, which could only end in eventual impotence and ruin.

Botha, in his reply, made it clear that his first objection to the demonstration was founded on the period:

"You wanted to celebrate the accomplishment of language equality immediately after the Assembly's decision—following an extremely bitter and warm debate as well as a division on purely party lines—to exercise those rights, *i.a.*, in the public service. The people at the moment were very excited. As leader I am compelled to take such things into account. I felt that we should avoid noisy bitterness, after having obtained that which we considered fair and just."

Botha further asked for facts in support of the charge against him of lukewarmness toward his language. The accuser, instead of supplying them, took refuge in the following: "It will do no good to rake up the bygones that induced us to form the opinion we did." In order to mask

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his discomfiture he puts a counter-question: "What is the meaning of your policy of conciliation?" That was the end of the language controversy, started by him.

Botha opposed the provocation of "noisy bitterness"; he had attained sufficient merit not to grudge either himself or others reasonable moderation regarding his mother-tongue. In September 1913 he addressed a Standerton rally, where he said, *i.a.*:

"There are those who, in these days, wax very eloquent on the language question. Not a few of them were completely unknown to fame when, amidst blood and tears, the people fought for its sacred rights. There are even language enthusiasts who speculated with that blood until they had become rich—men who know nothing of what it means to make great sacrifices for the people."

It was perhaps but natural that the efflorescence of Afrikaans literature came to be abused politically, which clashed with Botha's idea of good policy. It was inevitable, too, that the practical interest that might have been expected of him, as the Union's Premier, partly subsided when he noticed how the healthy enthusiasm for Afrikaans was used by many as an instrument for anti-British propaganda. In any case, experience has taught since 1910 that efficient reorganization of the Civil Service, for the benefit of Clause 137, cannot come about as if by magic.

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XXIX

BOTHA AND THE EMPIRE

PRESIDENT WILSON, it is said, used to state when he was a young professor that love for his birthplace—the Southern States—made him rejoice at their defeat in the Civil War. Botha regretted, until the end of his days, the result of the Boer war. At no time, however, did he feel the desire to render the incorporation of the Republics into the Empire undone, once it had become an accomplished fact. In March 1918 he clearly stated his position on moving a resolution in the Assembly at Capetown, placing on record the House's appreciation of the valour and steadfastness of the troops under Sir Douglas Haig. Among them were South Africans. The Nationalists opposed; no one, they argued, could expect ex-burghers to support such a motion. Botha replied to their objections:

"I shall never condone what was done to the Republics. I shall condemn it all the days of my life. However, peace was born from that great crime, and on my part nothing will be done to outrage the Treaty by any action that would sully the national honour. Signing a document insincerely amounts to hypocrisy. United South Africa was born at Vereeniging. Whoever took the oath on the Constitution, granted by the British authorities, without intending to observe it, is a hypocrite. What the Empire has inflicted on me I shall continue to criticize, but United South Africa is the child of historical events. People are laughing at conciliation and co-operation, but unless we respect each other's interests, civil war is sure to come."

Ever since unification, the interest taken by South Africa in the status of Imperial Dominions, and in international affairs generally, had become more intense. Lack of clear

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definition regarding status, coupled with the absence of an Empire Constitution, had given birth to divergent conclusions which, however, began to approach something like official uniformity. No one in South Africa any longer disputed the Union's title to the most complete internal autonomy, any more than is the evolution from Dominion status to international independence repudiated to-day.

Botha was not at all in love with casuistic interpretations of unwritten British Imperial constitutional law. According as the Empire glided from its 'second' into its 'third' phase, his views always squared with the most up-to-date conceptions of Dominion status. He personally played a part in the changes that came about. Without any legal training, and even without being well-read on the subject, he was among the pioneers of modern Imperial developments. Generally, he saw the position more clearly than did most statesmen, either within or without the Empire.

He never found it hard to proclaim that obligations, and even sacrifices, had to be undertaken in return for the advantages pertaining to the Imperial connexion. In November 1912 he told the S.A.P. Congress at Pretoria: "We are part and parcel of the Empire, on a basis of equality; we are a sister-State to England." Lord Buxton gives us a valuable vignette [1]:

> Botha believed that it was in the interest of his country and of his own white race, as well as an obligation of honour, that the Imperial connexion should be maintained, and that the Union should remain an integral part of the British Empire; he was convinced that the Empire would only endure, if it were founded on the freest individual liberty of action of each component part. In his view to trammel and fetter by artificial bonds, under whatever specious or high-sounding name, was the surest way of bringing the marvellous Commonwealth to an end.

As recently as 1911 Botha had heard the echoes of the antiquated scheme for an Imperial Parliament, authorized to legislate and take steps, binding on either the whole of

[1] *Life of Botha*, by Earl Buxton (Murray).

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the Empire or on a part to be specified. In 1919 he was privileged, at Paris, to witness international recognition of the Dominions as co-equal with Great Britain within the comity of nations. Between these two dates falls the Great War, which revealed to Europe the virility of the British 'Colonies' across the seas. England woke up to the existence of an entirely new brand of Empire, such as had probably never existed before, with the possible exception of the Hanseatic League.

On May 23, 1911, Mr Asquith, as Britain's Premier, opened the Imperial Conference of fifteen prime ministers and other responsible statesmen from England, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Newfoundland. The Union was represented by Botha and his colleagues Sir D. Graaff and F. S. Malan. A few introductory points —including the desirability of not publishing the debates— were soon settled. Botha was against publicity, quoting the salutary effect of secrecy in connexion with the South African National Convention. Without the strictly confidential nature of its proceedings, he said, Union as now existing would never have come to pass, and difficulties would have been considerably multiplied.

Sir Joseph Ward.—The New Zealand Premier, Sir J. Ward, elaborately introduced a motion that caused quiet amusement. He wanted an Imperial Council, consisting of representatives from all autonomous parts of the Empire. A memorandum, signed by a number of British Members of Parliament, supported the idea. The "Parliament for Defence," as conceived by Sir Joseph, was to have seventy-seven Dominion members (South Africa to supply seven), and 223 men to represent the United Kingdom. His basis was one white member to every 200,000 whites. A Senate was to consist of two members representing each Dominion, and two for Britain. This Parliament would be authorized to levy a Defence tax on the Dominions.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier (Canada) took the lead in condemning the scheme, root and branch. He was followed by Mr Fisher, Australian Premier, who remarked that his country

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already possessed the fullest military and naval powers. He considered other Imperial matters more urgent. Then came Botha, who opined, despite his ambition for drawing Imperial ties closer, that a central council would derogate from the autonomous powers of the Empire's component parts; no Parliament in the Empire, he said, would tolerate the idea. And, if the Imperial Council were to have purely advisory functions only, it would as likely as not develop into an unwanted busybody.

He pinned his faith to Conferences, which would serve Imperial interests much better, provided they were more efficiently organized. Centralization of authority clashed with traditional British policy, to which present conditions in the Empire owed so much. Decentralization, freedom of action, was the thing. An Imperial Council would render the common tie both distasteful and irksome to the Dominions. What they needed was co-operation, and always more co-operation, between the different portions of the Empire; that should be the goal.

The motion was withdrawn after Sir Edward Morris (Premier of Newfoundland) and Mr Asquith had spoken in opposition. The idea of a central parliament, with Imperial authority, ceased to be practical politics for good and all, nor did the Conference encourage other suggestions, made for the consideration of joint interests by a permanent committee of head officials or cabinet ministers.

The Declaration of London.—Early in June—the Conference lasted a few weeks, and did not adjourn until the 20th—Australia moved to express regret at the non-consultation of its representatives prior to ratification by the British Government of the Declaration of London. This was a recent international document concerning food as contraband in time of war, and compensation for sinking neutral merchant vessels. Fisher said:

> Since we are now a family of nations, has not the time arrived for the overseas Dominions to be informed, and, wherever possible, consulted as to the best means of protecting the interests of all concerned?

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He was referring to negotiations with foreign powers in general. Had Australia had sovereign independence, England would have consulted her. Why not now, circumstances being what they were? In the course of the debate Botha expressed his conviction to the effect that, in the best interests of the Empire, Britain should not bind herself, either by way of promise or convention with any foreign power, without consulting such Dominions as might be affected. Nevertheless, he did not intend voting for the resolution, as the Declaration of London would be an improvement on previous conditions; South African trade and shipping—in both directions—would benefit, especially in case the port of Lourenço Marques remained neutral in a war involving the Empire.

Winding up the debate, the English delegates promised to meet the desire of the Dominions for consultation, provided time and circumstances warranted it. Thereupon the Conference unanimously supported ratification of the Declaration of London.

Botha continued to attend the sittings, without taking part in the debates on the Merchant Shipping Act, an Imperial Court of Appeal, lower cable rates, penny postage, etc. He was not successful with a motion asking that the British Premier, instead of the Colonial Office, was to attend to all business between his Government and the Dominions; Mr Asquith excused himself on the ground that the British Prime Minister was snowed under with routine work as it was.

The Conference showed an interest in the Imperial Defence sittings at Whitehall, Sir William Nicholson and Sir Douglas Haig discussing with Dominion delegates such matters as uniformity of organization, armaments, and the training of officers. Regarding liability of all units of Dominion forces to be considered part of the Imperial machine, and as such to be kept in readiness for service anywhere in the world, no definite conclusion was reached. Botha pointed out that the Union, as a young country, still

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had to organize its land defences. He and Sir Wilfrid Laurier chiefly attended to military matters. At the time there was intolerable tension on the Continent, and war appeared even then to be imminent.

Botha's 1911 views on Imperial relations were sublimated —as far as possible—in the course of years, and in the direction of increased sovereignty on the part of the autonomous parts of the British Commonwealth of Nations, as General Smuts called the 'third' Empire. On October 20, 1916, *i.e.*, five and a half years later, and in the midst of the world clash, Botha in an informal letter to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, wrote:

"I am writing to you to-day chiefly because it is quite possible that we shall meet at the next Imperial Conference. I am particularly anxious that you should make sure of attending, as the subject of closer Imperial Union is certain to be raised once more and on this occasion with far better chances of success. I do not know whether you have changed your views on this important subject since the last Conference in 1911, but I certainly have not. I still think that the scheme suggested by Sir Joseph Ward on that occasion is impracticable and would interfere with the self-government rights of the Dominions. In fact, I have rather the idea of increasing those rights and making the self-governing colonies even more independent, while at the same time strengthening the Imperial connexion by economic and treaty obligations, putting in fact the Dominions on an equal footing with the Mother Country and converting them into sister rather than daughter colonies."

There was ground for his fear of seeing a *redivivus* of "closer Imperial Union." In April 1917 General Smuts, at the Imperial War Conference in London, had to fight once more for the federal solution of the Imperial problem: "To attempt," he said, "to run even the common concerns of that group by means of a central parliament and a central executive is, to my mind, absolutely to court disaster."

Opinions on the degree of freedom the Union could claim, or actually enjoyed, by virtue of the South Africa Act

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1909 were many and varied. While the letter of the Act has suffered little change, the inter-imperial as well as international status of British sister-States has altered a great deal. Further, and radical, changes may still result from either voluntary agreements or inevitable developments, the effects of which frequently cannot be gauged until after the event. Without any cognate changes of text, Union Buildings at Pretoria and Downing Street are equally conscious of the fact that their relationship to-day greatly differs from that of June 1, 1910, when Union had become a tangible fact. Botha's actions as Union Premier necessarily have for their touchstone the universally accepted interpretation of Dominion status, for the time being. What that interpretation was during the Great War emerges eloquently from General Smuts' speech at the Imperial War Conference mentioned:

> Too much, if I may say so, of the old ideas still cling to the new organism which is growing. I think that although in practice there is great freedom, yet in theory the status of the Dominions is of a subject character. Whatever we may say, and whatever we may think, we are subject provinces of Great Britain. That is the legal theory of the constitution, and in many ways which I need not specify to-day, that theory still permeates practice. The status of the Dominions as equal nations of the Empire will have to be recognized to a very large extent, far more fully than is done to-day, at any rate in the theory of the Constitution, if not in practice.

Canada moved a resolution embodying the spirit of these words, and the Conference accepted it. Complete constitutional equality between the Dominions and the United Kingdom was attained in 1919 in Paris. Even after that, some years had to elapse before the average person could realize what had happened. When England went to war in 1914, no one disputed the doctrine that the mere declaration by Downing Street sufficed in order to make the whole of the Empire belligerent; the manner of active participation, it is true, depended on the respective Dominion parliaments. Eight years later, Mr Lloyd George issued his 'clarion call' in favour of war against Turkey in con-

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nexion with Chanak. At that time, however, compliance with the aspirations of Downing Street was no longer self-evident. Canada's Premier declared that only his own Parliament was authorized to decide as to whether it wanted to become a party to a war affecting either some Empire country or an outside power.

Botha's actual practice consistently followed his theory, viz., that Imperial as well as Dominion interests would in the long run be best served by the widest imaginable liberty of action exercised by every single partner. Of the population of the Union, a good many aspired to complete sovereign independence; Botha traversed their views by emphasizing the advantages South Africa derived from partnership in the up-to-date British Commonwealth. As he was able fully to appreciate these advantages, he was prepared to assume corresponding obligations. Therefore, when a number of people in the Union preferred, in 1914, to adopt a passive and waiting attitude in the supposed national interest, Botha forced through a policy of active support for the Empire—equally in the interests of South Africa. The result was a heightened measure of Dominion independence, beyond the wildest optimists' dreams of 1910.

Botha and his Silk Stockings.—The conviction that South Africa's prosperity and security would be better served inside than outside the Empire was challenged by a group of turbulent politicians in the Union. Concurrent with the extension of the doctrine that the autonomous British States were by no means forced to remain within the Empire—but could leave it without any great difficulty, if they felt so inclined—the secessionists did not require much sharpening of wits in order to justify a constitutional agitation for a sovereign Republic, undertaken for consumption at the polls. How could South Africa better use its freedom, their hearers were told, than by a simple resolution of Parliament, proclaiming sovereign independence!

Botha's work at the Imperial Conference—accompanied by two colleagues who had been members of the Afrikander

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Bond—incongruous as it was with the kind of logic indicated above, caused a great many of his countrymen anxiety and suspicion, as a matter of course. The Westminster deliberations were not published until a couple of months afterward. It was only the London festivities in honour of visiting premiers that stimulated attention in the Dominions. For example, the news that Botha, in Court dress—including silk stockings—had been the guest of King George had a remarkable effect on the temper of his compatriots, many of whom are always inclined to think the worst of their leaders. Those stockings gradually assumed the shape of a symbol of national treason!

Correct and careful in matters of dress and appearance generally, Botha was not at all fond of show. Sir Henry Lucy describes a reception, given by the Government shortly after the Conference began its sittings. The ex-Commandant-General of the Transvaal stood talking to Lord Kitchener and Sir Ian Hamilton. "These, in common with British officers, diplomats and others invested with the right of wearing insignia, displayed them; General Botha wore plain dinner dress."

At the same time he was far from neglecting the psychological value of clothes. Among the Boers it was accounted bad taste, even for a highly placed officer, to wear uniform. Field-cornets, commandants, and even generals were supposed to be personally known to burghers, and therefore not to require any insignia of rank. Botha was the first, during the Boer war, to break with this tradition. After his rapid promotion to a generalship he wore a simple tunic.

Once more, in 1911, he was an honoured guest in Great Britain. In addition to other distinctions he received honorary degrees at Cambridge, Glasgow, and Oxford. General Booth, the remarkable founder of the Salvation Army, noted in his diary a visit paid him by Botha in London: "Much pleased with him; he was most hearty. I think our talk will bring forth some important results in the future."

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A prominent personage, who in his official *entourage* had met Botha, and saw him again in June 1911, wrote to South Africa: "I saw Botha yesterday: looking well as far as clearness of skin goes, but not, I think, very strong. He goes off to Kissingen after the coronation. I find he creates a good impression."

Life on steamers and in palatial hotels was fatal to his constitution, affecting—as it had done previously on similar occasions—his digestive system. For the second time he underwent a stringent cure at Kissingen. In the autumn of 1911 he returned to his country.

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XXX

BOTHA AND GENERAL HERTZOG

SINCE the end of 1912 much has been heard in our country of the theory that General Hertzog, by the famous Cabinet crisis of those days, was "made a martyr owing to what he had done for the people." These words are President Steyn's, but the view they embody is not destined to hold water for very long in our historical records. It is incorrect to make it appear as if General Hertzog had become the victim of Botha's deep-laid scheme to "chuck him out." On the contrary, there are indications that the supposed martyr was the real aggressor, working to push Botha out of the premiership because of his "excessive weakness and lack of principle."

The expulsion of General Hertzog, sensational though it was, did not come at all as a bolt from the blue. It was the result aimed at by his deliberate provocation, calculated to make him "stronger than ever," as President Steyn rightly noted immediately after the event. No one may reproach a politician for turning his back on a fellow-worker with whose policy he never could sympathize, or, at any rate, could sympathize with no longer. That General Hertzog, sincerely desirous of saving the country, felt called upon to fight Botha and to sap his influence was no doubt true. His opponent was manœuvred into a step considered fatal by many—for in reality it was General Hertzog himself who brought about the crisis, thus becoming the father of schism—but that he took the step is something for which thousands will honour him. All the more reason, this, for an attempt to reduce the sensational event in question to normal proportions in order, *sine ira et studio*, to penetrate, through its dramatic wrappings, to the heart of the matter.

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General Hertzog's Career.—General Hertzog was Botha's junior by three and a half years. He had passed his boyhood in Kimberley and studied at Stellenbosch and Amsterdam (Holland). Plucky, independent, pushful and intelligent, he had many of the qualities necessary to a leader. Should one count among these the impressionability that on occasion would transform a considered line of conduct into passionate impulsiveness? He was not yet thirty when he was appointed to a judgeship in the Free State, where he had taken up his residence after a couple of years at the Pretoria bar. Four years had elapsed when the Boer war broke out. He received a command, and chiefly operated in the south-western districts of the Republic. His efforts to maintain himself in Cape Colony failed, although he at one time put a great distance between his commando and the Free State border. At Vereeniging he successfully opposed President Steyn's contention that delegates were bound by the mandate of their constituents on the question of war *versus* peace. During the negotiations on the Peace Treaty, he was one of the Big Five on the Boer side at Pretoria. Six years later, Steyn wrote to Merriman:

> Allow me to thank you for the kind expression that you made in your letter about my good friend Hertzog. I am glad that you have learned to appreciate him; for, believe me, a nobler and a straighter man I have not met. The more you know him, the more you value him. To my mind he is one of the greatest assets of South Africa. It may be that I am too prejudiced in his favour, but I don't think so; for I learned to know him in dark days, and he always proved himself in the fullest sense a man.

As a politician General Hertzog only came into prominence when, as a Free State Minister, he pushed through an Education Act under which the ideal of language equality was carried so far as to make English as well as Dutch compulsory for all children. By his temperament Hertzog was driven to the aggressive side of the Afrikander renaissance, that, following the restoration of political power to his people, engendered agitation, especially among the

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younger generation. Thus his "two-stream" formula came into being, contrasting with Botha's desire for the co-operation of both races in public life, which to many seemed not merely unintelligible but unnatural.

During the first Session of the Union Parliament the Opposition tabled a motion, censuring language arrangements in the Free State—a welcome opportunity to General Hertzog to expound his views. The skirmish left him fairly unscathed. Botha was subsequently criticized, not without cause, for having brought pressure to bear on the provincial administration at Bloemfontein in order to get the Free State Act watered down, in response to the violent condemnation in English circles; at a great election meeting held in Johannesburg on July 13, 1910, Botha had called it unfair and impossible to expect Government to interfere with Free State legislation.

Wanted: A New Party.—In the bosom of the Government party, which had not yet had an opportunity of developing traditions of discipline—and originally lacked all unity—the idea meanwhile arose that a new organization was called for. General Hertzog, Minister of Justice (and since May 1912 Minister of Native Affairs as well), was notified that a strong movement had arisen in that direction. On May 13, 1911, he wrote to President Steyn, informing him that he, Hertzog, had been asked to take the lead. Did he refuse? Not at all! His reply was that at least a year would have to go by before a start could be made. He assured Steyn:

> I will not be disloyal to colleagues, but to continue for long as we have been going on during the past six months is impossible.

The reference evidently is to Botha's extensive election campaign throughout the Union, on the basis of conciliation. Further, Hertzog wrote to Steyn:

> If they proceed in the old way to neglect and sacrifice the people's interests in order to curry favour with the Opposition, I shall have to refuse pertinently, one of these days, to remain a party to it.

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General J. B. M. Hertzog

Photo Russell, London

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That is, he would have to resign as a member of the unspeakable Botha Cabinet. President Steyn lost no time in coming to General Hertzog's assistance; in the course of a public speech, made at Bloemfontein on June 7, he said:

> Our good General is being used as the bogey with which Unionists (the jingoes of those days) and the chicken-hearted among us are being intimidated.

And further:

> The pinchbeck monster of the elections is dead. The slumbers of even the nervous jingoes among us, or of the most spineless jellyfish, are no longer disturbed by it.

There is no reason to suppose that Steyn did anything to correct Hertzog's conception of Cabinet loyalty, or to remind him how little evidence his inclusion in the first Botha Cabinet, with its tentative character, supplied of Botha's currying favour with his opponents; the Premier well knew at the time that this inclusion would mean a considerable loss in votes and seats!

For more than two and a half years Hertzog remained a member of the first Union Government, formed in May 1910. We have it on his own authority that at intervals he thought fit to carry through his own wishes by arguing strongly with the Prime Minister, and even by threats of resignation. Strangely enough, there was no longer even the faintest unpleasantness during the second half of his ministerial career. He did remain dissatisfied; his sense of grievance at the Government's policy increased progressively. All the time, however, there never was a summing-up of serious, concrete cases of dereliction of duty toward the nation; the sting of his charges was to be found in their very vagueness. During the second, quieter, phase he never once protested, either with the Premier or in the Cabinet Council, against any step taken. Can it be that gradually he had made up his mind that Botha and his men were hopeless? That the fight for South Africa's weal could more effectively be staged on the platform than

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round the table and within the South Africa Party, even at the risk of seeing the people once more stranded "in the desert"?

An Open Letter.—Shortly after he had declared war against his former colleagues, Hertzog in an open letter (March 1913) enlightened the public as to his personal relations with the Prime Minister. It appears these began by being strained as a result of the Free State language difficulty. In August 1911, shortly before the great South Africa Party pyrotechnic congress at Bloemfontein, he for the second time wanted to surrender his portfolios. His Free State colleague Abraham Fischer then succeeded in getting Botha to amend certain instructions to the Administrator at Bloemfontein regarding education. Hertzog went to the Premier's office, complaining of lack of confidence; the same evening he visited Botha at his house. Aggrievedly the leader remonstrated with his unruly Minister on the latter's fondness for too close political relations with the younger set at Pretoria. The Minister of Justice knew better how to please the rising generation; he called Botha's grievance insignificant. The open letter continued:

> From that day until the Tuesday after my speech at De Wildt—the day when the crisis began—I enjoyed a period of unaccustomed peace, compared with the preceding fifteen months. Not that I possessed Botha's confidence, but the lack of it was no longer deliberately made quite so tangible and offensive. There was at least a semblance of trust.

This is Hertzog's own picture: while he himself avoids trouble, the Premier leaves him in peace, and treats him considerately. Now, what more could he have expected? He was holding himself in readiness to become the leader of a "national" anti-Botha crusade. His platform speeches were calculated more and more to suggest to the country that the Minister of Justice absolutely condemned his colleagues' *modus operandi*! Very likely those colleagues under-estimated his potentialities as an agitator; they might have tried to draw him into their intimate political

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family. In Government circles, it would appear, there was excessive optimism as to the conversion of both Dutch- and English-speaking electors to the Botha gospel of political co-operation. Were we not all South Africa Party in 1910! It may well be asked whether the voters, who had seemingly adopted the doctrine of conciliation, had permanently shaken off their instinctive inclination to revert to barbaric isolation.

Nylstroom.—A very protracted drought was a feature of the year 1912. No wonder that the countryside was fidgety and petulant. In addition to all this, a real flood of oratory came in October. Hertzog started it at Nylstroom in a speech, meant as a reply to an utterance by Sir Thomas Smartt, who had succeeded Sir Starr Jameson as Unionist leader. In those days the Unionists preached the subjection of Dominion interests to those of the Empire in general, and of England in particular. Hertzog must have realized that such a doctrine, antiquated as it was, could scarcely stand another five years. Instead of simply ignoring its adherents, he fiercely trounced them at Nylstroom. He classified them, notably Sir Thomas Smartt, as foreign adventurers (*vreemde fortuinzoekers*) who did not deserve a say in Union politics. He added that, until such time as the Opposition might show signs of grace, he would continue to expatiate on questions of language and race.

This kind of talk thoroughly woke up the old "jingo" section, which had been fast asleep! The political sky became overcast, and before long pitch-dark. Sir Percy Fitzpatrick was on his legs at once as one of the most ardent mouthpieces of the section referred to. The Nylstroom dust, he said, had been kicked up; there had not been the slightest real breeze to raise it, for no one had said or done anything against the Dutch language. Botha, he added, went in fear of his Minister of Justice.

A couple of days later Hertzog addressed his Smithfield constituents, reiterating his aversion to adventurers, but apologizing to Sir Thomas Smartt. Botha, in a speech at Durban (five days after this), for the *n*th time praised

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co-operation, and deprecated uncalled-for platform antics. Meanwhile Sir Thomas had at Fort Beaufort taken exception to the "adventurer" accusation; at the same time he appealed to the Premier to put an end to the improper attitude of his colleague. Toward the end of October, Merriman mounted the platform at Victoria West. Though still friendly with President Steyn and General Hertzog, he did not hesitate to condemn the Nylstroom speech.

Early in November, three Ministers visited Johannesburg in order to be present at the establishment of an S.A.P. Club. Hertzog, who was one of them, made a moderate speech. The same evening, at Vrededorp, he told his hearers that no one more than himself esteemed Botha; as long as the Prime Minister was there he, Hertzog, would not have the job if he were offered ten thousand pounds *per annum*! Those who were concerned with other than purely South African interests he likened to cakes of dung, which might be made to stick to a kraal wall for some little while, but would be washed off by the first freshet. At this meeting, too, Hertzog launched his "two-stream" slogan, as an antithesis to Botha's "conciliation."

The next day General Smuts was hard put to it to pacify his constituents at a meeting addressed by him; they intensely disliked Hertzog's Nylstroom and Vrededorp speeches. Part of the Afrikander section, however, was delighted; a great many English-speaking South Africans, as well as other Government supporters, took umbrage. On November 20 the second annual congress of the S.A.P. was held at Pretoria; the lessened zeal on behalf of the conciliation movement was apparent from the fact that barely half a dozen English-speaking Natalians attended, as against three dozen the previous year, at Bloemfontein. Hertzog's tactics were beginning to bear fruit.

De Wildt.—After a Cabinet council, at which the whole situation had been reviewed, Botha spoke at a by-election in Grahamstown, in order to clear the oppressive atmosphere. Once again he explained his policy of co-operation.

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On the following day Hertzog went to De Wildt, in the Pretoria district; this time, a fresh speech of a sensational character became the immediate cause of the 'crisis.' The object of true nationalism, so the Minister held forth, was to get the country governed by none but those who were inspired by true affection for South Africa. He "made bold to state that within five years no one, not even Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, would dare maintain that South Africa's interests were subordinate to those of the Empire. Imperialism was good only inasmuch as it might be of use to South Africa." He wound up:

> I am not one of those who always have their mouths full of conciliation and loyalty, for these are vain words that deceive no one. Many people have turned their backs on them, saying: "All this signifies so little that I would sooner not hear it any longer." I myself have always said that I do not know what conciliation means.

Botha, who was at Rusthof, had to return to the capital. Ministers were called together. Colonel Leuchars—who had joined the Cabinet after the defeat of Sir F. Moor at the polls—was tired of the speechifying of his colleague; he wanted to get out. In his report to Steyn, Abraham Fischer, the aged and mellowed friend and colleague of Hertzog's, stated: "We are staging a farce"; he was the only Minister, he added, who did not hold the view that

> Hertzog's untimely action was neutralizing all the good wrought by Botha's policy. Yet I cannot deny that in this case, as elsewhere, Hertzog's manner—although perfectly innocent in intention—was, as regards tact and tactics, unfortunate and uncalled-for.

Was not Fischer labouring under a delusion as to the Minister of Justice's repeated "unfortunate" appearances not being intended to pile up difficulties for the Government? Was there not considerable method in Hertzog's "tactlessness," which, in Steyn's eyes, made him a martyr, *i.e.*, a deliberate agitator? Shortly after his expulsion from the

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Cabinet, Hertzog, in a weekly that was devoted to his cause, set out the course of events, as follows:

> At a Cabinet meeting on December 10, 1912, specially convened, Botha announced that Colonel Leuchars—who was a moderate, accommodating representative of Natal—intended resigning. Leuchars was not present, as Hertzog's latest speech had annoyed him. Hertzog was extremely surprised: this was the first time he had been told there was anything very much wrong! On the same day, Hertzog and Leuchars met; the latter agreed that South African interests should take precedence over Imperial considerations. The next morning Botha interviewed Hertzog. Leuchars insisted on resigning; Botha, who also embraced the principle of "South Africa before the Empire," asked Hertzog what he advised; the latter demanded complete freedom to proclaim the principle from the housetops, without which he would send in his resignation. Another Cabinet council the same day! Everybody joined in the chorus of "South Africa first." Nevertheless, Hertzog felt that they were all thirsting for his resignation. He determined not to go, unless asked to do so, due cause being shown. Voluntarily he left the meeting, so as not to impede free discussion. Two days afterward, Fischer approached him with a letter he was to sign, promising not to make speeches on very high politics without previously consulting the Premier. His self-respect prevented him from accepting this proposal. In the afternoon a final Cabinet meeting took place. Botha informed his colleagues that he would tender his resignation to his Excellency. On Saturday, December 14, the resignation was accepted; the first Union Cabinet had ceased to exist.

Burton and Sauer take a Hand.—This presentation of the case by General Hertzog is, of course, quite correct, as far as it goes; it is, however, by no means the whole of the case. It fails to record, for instance, that Leuchars—who was the reverse of pugnacious—as well as Botha proved extremely patient and desirous of meeting Hertzog, until the very last. Likewise that the whole incident might have ended innocuously had not Messrs Burton and Sauer been seized with the fear that, after the Premier's conciliatory attitude, any drawn battle, resulting from the wordy warfare, would leave the Government without the slightest guarantee against Hertzog's knack—whether deliberate or other-

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wise—of harming the S.A.P. by his orations. Probably Hertzog did not come to hear of this until later. The two Ministers, urged by the warnings of Merriman—who was in England at the time—told Botha of their wish that Hertzog should expressly undertake not to ventilate any opinions on the Union's status within the Empire unless he had consulted, if not the Cabinet, at any rate the Prime Minister.

Short of his giving such an undertaking, they said, they would have to consider resignation. It was therefore no longer "the hysterical, Imperial policy of Smartt, Leuchars & Co."—President Steyn's elegant phrase—for the sake of which Hertzog was being thrown to the wolves—it was the view of Merriman, Burton, and Sauer—*i.e.*, the Cape friends of General Hertzog and President Steyn—that succeeded in producing a really acute crisis at the eleventh hour. Fischer was quite ready to convey a request, as advocated by Burton and Sauer, to the Minister of Justice, General Smuts, in order to serve the aged Fischer's convenience, drafted a statement, but without in the least intending that the latter should rub the very draft under Hertzog's nose—as actually happened. The definite refusal to provide a guarantee, as demanded by Burton and Sauer, was followed immediately by Botha's resignation, which meant Cabinet dissolution.

The "Farce."—For five whole, anxious days the "farce" dragged on, confined strictly within the Cabinet circle. The Premier's desire to avoid a breach within the youthful South Africa Party was so ardent that he was hoping against hope until the very last to retain a chastened General Hertzog in his Cabinet. Repeatedly the two compared notes; time after time the Cabinet met, intervals of profound silence alternating with protracted, but always placid, discussion. There was no question of either explosions or threats. Just as if ordinary, everyday matters had been on the *tapis* these men acted and talked, until the moment came when the fated surprise had to be sprung on the people; like a sudden, volcanic outburst it reverberated

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through the length and breadth of the land. "On Saturday, at about noon," Hertzog tells us, "General Botha's private secretary informed me that the Prime Minister had resigned, whereupon I left my office."

Whose head was fit for the martyr's crown of thorns on that memorable Saturday afternoon: Hertzog's or Botha's?

Hertzog's "expulsion" was the logical sequel to his refusal—unjustifiable by any appeal to constitutional usage—to keep in sympathetic touch with his Premier and other colleagues. The crisis itself automatically flowed from his unwillingness—likewise in conflict with constitutional practice—to leave a Cabinet in which he was a misfit, as his own self-respect ought to have warned him. No one can deny him the merit of having manœuvred so cleverly that his followers felt he had suffered indignity when at last he was expelled from, thrown out of, the Government. For months on end he carried on a guerilla war against his late chief, stirring up unrest. According to plan—as he had informed Steyn—he had given Botha rope for more than a twelvemonth, so that the Premier might comfortably hang himself. When his colleagues, according to the proverbial worm's example, finally began to turn, Hertzog assumed the thankful *rôle* of the innocent victim, with Botha cast for the wicked sinner.

It is instructive to note that the ultimate protests against Hertzog's platform manner did not originate in "jingoistic" Natal, and even less in Botha's office, but in the camp commanded by Merriman, which had continued to bask in General Hertzog's favour, and where any idea of taking Botha's part as such was absent, so to say. Merriman had taken fright at what he called "Hertzog's slack jaw." Possibly the latter had expected to be able to checkmate his colleagues in the character of determined opponents of the principle of "South Africa first." Baulked in this, he must have seen himself reduced to the necessity of saving his face by an ultimatum insisting on his perfect right to continue his "tactlessness and bad tactics," as Fischer called it. That Botha, instead of resorting to force, was extremely

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accommodating, is certain. It surely did not suit either his party or his policy to eject General Hertzog! The Premier never imposed his authority sufficiently to claim from his rather awkward colleague an account of his doings. The latter, on his part, consistently remained passive in the Cabinet, despite the Government's inclination—so pernicious, in his view—"to neglect the interests of the people," to use his own words. Immediately after the De Wildt speech, Botha wrote to President Steyn:

"In Cabinet General Hertzog has so far supported me throughout; in public he has failed to show what precise point of Government policy, of any practical importance, he felt bound to disapprove."

And further, on the speech in question:

"The effect was that of an electrical shock, as far as our English-speaking fellow-citizens are concerned; it soon became plain to me that the remnant of moderate English Afrikanders, still clinging to us, had been estranged as well."

Hertzog could count on the secession from the ranks of the South Africa Party, established no more than a year previously, of the "national" element. In addition, he helped to weaken that party, and therefore the Government, by driving from it the "moderate British," at whom Botha's conciliation policy was consistently aimed.

Cabinet Solidarity.—It is legitimate to inquire whether, as contended by General Hertzog, self-respect prohibits a Minister from promising his chief not to discuss matters of high policy in public, except after common counsel. Constitutions based on the English model, including our own, make no mention of the existence of a Prime Minister. Nevertheless, our political world generally recognizes, as Lord Oxford's recent book puts it,

> the convention of Cabinet solidarity, that is of such an appearance of unity as compels a dissentient to resign his office before he openly speaks and votes against the policy of the Administration.

Lord Melbourne, who was Premier in name only, nevertheless opined that "it did not matter very greatly

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what Ministers said, as long as they were all saying the same thing." Lord Rosebery compared the Prime Minister to the chairman of a board of directors—his was the initiative and the lead in vital issues. In view of all this, the conclusion that Hertzog, with his rather long—and deliberate, or, as Fischer called it, "innocent"—score would have been neither humiliated nor insulted if he had accepted the Burton-Sauer scheme with a good grace, does not appear extravagant at all. President Steyn's insinuation—in reply to Fischer's request for advice, during the crisis—to the effect that Botha made use of his lieutenants just as long as he had need of them, and then jettisoned them, and that anyone with convictions of his own nettled him, appears unfair, particularly where the case of Hertzog has to serve as an illustration. For Botha never called him in as a welcome lieutenant; as regards the jettisoning process, the truth is that the would-be Jonah during the whole of the past year had been pining for the glorious moment when he could advantageously evacuate his position on the Botha vessel. He himself records: "There could be no doubt as to the Prime Minister having reluctantly accepted me as a colleague."

Was the breach between the Botha adherents and the Hertzog support unavoidable? The answer must needs be in the affirmative to those who recognize that in 1912 a fundamental and irreconcilable divergence of political ideals had arisen as between the two groups. One postulated partnership in a commonwealth of free British States as an essential condition for the Union's future, in our own time. The other looked for salvation to a sovereign State, with a republican *régime*, outside that commonwealth. Since 1912, however, the internal structure of the British Empire has undergone changes so radical that, in the result, the clash between those two ideals has become less acute—so much so that, in the opinion of many sensible people, it has ceased to exist.

Be it understood that South Africa's white inhabitants, shortly after unification, fell into three categories: ultra-

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Afrikanders on the one side, and the extreme English on the other, with a preponderant section of moderate Afrikanders and British in between. The latter section could not conceive of any political salvation except by co-operation in public life. Of this middle group, which constantly fluctuated in its numbers, Botha was the soul, and the South Africa Party the outward manifestation. English extremists, since 1910, had their own party organization known as the Unionists. No wonder the ultra-Dutch had simultaneously begun to emulate them, hankering after separate existence as a preliminary to the extension of their influence and to ultimate power. In Hertzog they found their champion, who toward the end of 1912 deemed the moment suitable for leaving his party, not by running away, but by having himself "chucked out."

After a long and hardly elevating mix-up, the Hertzog party was founded. Botha remained Union Premier until the day of his death, almost seven years later.

Twelve years after the crisis, General Hertzog captured the premiership.

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XXXI

BOTHA AND GENERAL DE WET

THE sensation caused by the Pretoria events of December 14, 1912, was not lessened by the fact that the "two voices" with which Ministers had been speaking had greatly surprised the public, so that decisive action by the Premier might have been anticipated at any moment. Lord Gladstone, Governor-General, accepted Botha's resignation in the forenoon; the same statesman was invited, in the afternoon of that day, to form a new Government. It was not long before the shepherd had his flock together once more, excepting of course the ex-Minister of Justice and of Native Affairs, who was not asked to rejoin. Colonel Leuchars stood out, and retired from politics.

Many people, especially in the ex-Republics—where, prior to 1899, members of the Executive were elected for definite periods, and therefore could not be deposed—were hopelessly bewildered by General Hertzog's fate no less than by the exact nature of the crisis that had taken its name from him. The general impression was that Botha would never even attempt to get on without his Free State colleague. When, however, all doubt had vanished, the hope was expressed that a little confabulation would lead to the 'restoration' of the ex-Minister. Originally few people recognized the inevitability of a rift within the South Africa Party; whilst very few realized that what was tantamount to the raising of the Republican banner was bound to produce such a result sooner or later.

Shortly after his expulsion Hertzog, in a Press interview, described his relations with his late colleagues. On December 17 his Smithfield constituents gave him a vote of confidence. Botha, on the 20th, manifested in the

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newspapers that the new Government would continue his policy of building up a united nation on non-racial lines; he was of opinion that the question of precedence of South African, as opposed to Imperial, interests should not have been discussed, there being no occasion; he himself put South African interests first, and so did the bulk of the people; this, however, did not prevent either himself or the South Africa Party from fully appreciating the Imperial tie; under its free Constitution, South Africa was enabled to develop fully both its local patriotism and its national characteristics, always within the limits of the Empire; the De Wildt speech had been taken to imply opposition to the policy of racial reconciliation; it therefore led to the general conviction that the Government was speaking with two voices; in those circumstances he, Botha, could not possibly consent to remain Premier, and, since Hertzog refused to resign, Cabinet dissolution had remained his only course.

Reinstatement Ruled Out.—On January 4, 1913, Hertzog made a speech at Smithfield from which Botha finally concluded that restored co-operation was out of the question; so reinstatement was not to be thought of. A few days later President Steyn suggested that Hertzog should be asked to return; but Botha stuck to his guns. On January 24 Parliament reassembled; a few caucus meetings of S.A.P. Senators and M.L.A.'s took place. During the first few days of the Session the respective friends of Botha and Hertzog, authorized by these two, met and privately discussed the situation. The result was *nil.* The ex-Minister would not abandon his claim, which was that Botha should resign, seeing that he, Hertzog, could no longer serve under him! Those who asked for information concerning the crisis were invariably told by Botha that there was no personal quarrel; he abstained from offensive expressions toward his antagonist.

"I never queried General Hertzog's good faith or patriotism, whatever may have been said about me by the other side. Tell the public to remain calm and moderate.

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I have every confidence in the common sense of our people," Botha wrote to one who wanted him to "heal the breach." A great many interested spectators completely failed to understand the inwardness of the situation, which was that the Hertzog ultimatum had for its object 'chucking' Botha out of the Government.

Recently Mr Fischer, who remained a member of the Cabinet, had been transitorily honoured with a vote of confidence by his constituents at Bethlehem; it therefore became difficult—especially for Free State politicians—to select the positions one intended to occupy on the brand-new fighting front. Scarcely half a dozen South Africa Party members of Parliament proved willing to side against Botha.

Enter President Steyn. His solution was that the Assembly should be dissolved, Botha and Hertzog both standing back for the time being, in order that the party might fix on fresh leadership. The Premier replied that it would be cowardice on his part to run away. The dispute, he pointed out, was not one for the electorate to settle; the annual congress of the South Africa Party would have to decide, as an internal difference of opinion was involved. The Cabinet crisis was not a national affair, resorting as it did under the party organization, which sent its best men to Congress as its delegates.

At a largely attended meeting in Rustenburg General de la Rey, who presided, advised his hearers to "let the grass grow over the quarrel." At a big demonstration, held in favour of Botha at Standerton in December, the Premier returned to the charge:

"The man who stands for the Empire rather than for South Africa is a traitor to his country; but to take up a hostile position would be folly, because there is simply no occasion for it."

On May 24, 1913, the Kruger statue at Pretoria was unveiled. From Capetown, where Parliament was in Session, Botha wrote a letter for publication. Addressing his Dutch-speaking countrymen particularly, he sounded the praises of the late President. Of his English-speaking

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THE MEMORIAL TO PAUL KRUGER AT PRETORIA

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compatriots he asked: "Has your late enemy really been crushed? Is not his spirit still alive?" And then his thoughts went back to "that other great man," Rhodes. He reminded South Africa that the contradictory ideals of those two had led to a violent clash. "Which of them prevailed?" Botha asked in conclusion. "Humbly, we bow our heads."

In those days it was risky to speak respectfully of Rhodes to the Dutch, and his reference, at the foot of the Kruger statue, to "that other great man" was grist, warmly welcomed by the 'Nationalist' mill.

The Fateful Capetown Congress.—Over 240 delegates, including but a few from Natal, flocked to Capetown on November 20, 1913, for the great South Africa Party Congress. The Free Staters had had almost twelve months to sum up the situation, and to look for allies in other provinces. They kept together at the back of the hall, and frequently were very noisy. Botha spoke for more than an hour; Hertzog followed.

General de Wet then got up to move that President Steyn be asked to lead the party. Someone else preferred Merriman as Premier. Finally, on the motion of Mr C. J. Krige—afterward Speaker of the Assembly—it was resolved by 131 votes to 90 to "request the Government to carry on." Congress then gave its attention to miscellaneous matters; but most of the Free Staters left after General de Wet, approaching the table where members of the Committee were sitting, had called out "Adieu!"

The schism in the strongest and most influential political organization of South Africa, and at the same time in the Dutch-speaking section of the population, had become an accomplished fact. As long as this section was oppressed, its members had stood shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand. They had no sooner obtained freedom of action than the leaders began to criticize and intrigue among themselves, thus engendering division among their followers. Once more it had become a national sport to despise and blackguard one another!

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The moment Hertzog was no longer a Minister, General de Wet girded up his loins for the anti-Botha campaign. Eleven years before, they had had the first open bout, at Vereeniging, where the Free Staters opposed the conclusion of a peace treaty, proposed by the Transvaalers. When some of the officers continued to insist that the war should be prosecuted, since there remained always Cape Colony in which to fight, Botha had retorted:

"I may be permitted to have my own opinion on that subject. Chief Commandant de Wet was unable to invade the Colony even in the best days, when he had fresh horses and a large force. How, then, are we to manage now? Winter is coming, and our horses are spent."

This speech wounded the passionate Free State commander to the quick, although anything of the sort was far from Botha's intention. De Wet had always been consumed by the ambition to overrun the Colony with his commandos. Twice he made ineffectual attempts. General Smuts, on the other hand, had managed to penetrate into Cape Colony with a select band of Transvaalers, shortly after de Wet's failure; with his constantly increasing forces the former had proved quite a handful to the British. Mention, at Vereeniging, of his reverses south of the Orange had hit de Wet like a stinging reproach. Moreover, it turned out to be Botha who took a leading part during the peace negotiations, and who subsequently built up a progressive reputation in politics; his conciliation policy had gradually won the day, as de Wet was anything but pleased to observe. All this combined to alienate the latter from the Premier; de Wet esteeming his own particular brand of patriotism a finer article than Botha's, although he lagged far behind the Transvaal leader as a skilful statesman.

The "Dungheap" Demonstration.—Immediately following the sensational Cabinet crisis, an anti-Botha movement was started at Pretoria in December 1912, under the name of the Hertzog Demonstration Committee. It proved no difficult matter to persuade de Wet to emerge from his

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GENERAL CHRISTIAN DE WET

Photo E. N. A.

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relative obscurity as a farmer in the Vrede district, in order to add his strength to the agitation. With dramatic suddenness he appeared at Pretoria. At an impromptu open-air meeting, known to fame as "the Dungheap Demonstration" (December 28, 1912), he loudly clamoured —moved by an indignation that was hard to justify— against Hertzog's expulsion. He must have felt that he was not quite the man one would have selected as adviser to the public on delicate matters of constitutional practice. He reminded his audience—as angry as it was ill-informed —that "a few years after the Boer war he had been dragged by the hairs into the Free State Cabinet—as Minister of Agriculture—but soon left it, recognizing as he did that there were younger, and more highly educated, men who could profitably replace him."

This admitted unfitness for the arts of government, however, nowise restrained the turbulent patriot from feeding the flame of discontent, heart and soul. In order to mark his contempt for the de-Hertzogged Botha *régime*, he resigned from the Defence Council, which was presided over by General Smuts as the responsible Minister. De Wet now became one of the most active propagandists for the embryo-republican party. With sly enjoyment of other people's quandaries, or else in pained astonishment—as the case might be—outsiders were able to watch the famous Boer warlords belabouring and doing their best to out-manœuvre each other.

A year after his Capetown "adieu" to the South Africa Party, de Wet saw his public career end pathetically when, west of Vryburg (Bechuanaland), the redoubtable warrior was captured, only in the nick of time, on his way to German territory. Among military men this ignominious Rebellion incident created great interest, especially on account of the rapidity with which events had moved. To Botha, who had never ceased to appreciate his brave comrade's great qualities, de Wet's rash acts were a source of profound pain. When, as Commander-in-chief of the Union forces, he marched against the rebels under de Wet near Winburg,

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grief affected him so deeply that he was obliged to drug himself.

De Wet was sentenced to six years' imprisonment, but released after serving eleven months. For this reprieve the Premier cheerfully assumed the greater part of the responsibility. It redounds to the credit of the South African people that no voice was raised against the mercy extended to the sixty-two-year-old hothead. De Wet survived Botha for two and a half years.

At the foot of the Monument.—The last meeting between the two took place on December 16, 1913, four weeks after the famous "adieu" at Capetown. It was at the unveiling of the Bloemfontein Monument erected to the memory of 26,251 women and children who had perished in the Boer war concentration camps. The solemn ceremony was attended by about twenty thousand people, a remarkable congregation in our thinly populated country. After President Steyn's inaugural oration, the Netherlands Consul-General, Botha, de Wet, and, finally, de la Rey spoke. All felt the shadow overhanging the monument. The imposing obelisk, resting on its bronze pedestal, represented the efforts of the whole of the compatriots of the victims; yet here those same compatriots were facing each other in bitter party warfare. Our people traditionally take their differences of opinion very seriously!

A Pretoria newspaper, commenting on the ceremony, remarked: "The Prime Minister was the guest of the Free Staters; as true hosts they behaved." To describe Botha as a guest was incorrect, inasmuch as the monument embodies the devotion, not merely of Free Staters but of their fellow-South Africans through the length and breadth of the Union.

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XXXII

BOTHA AT THE CARLTON HOTEL

THE first of a series of years replete with constant effort and sorrow for Botha opened with 1913. Just as if politics were not causing him enough anxiety and disillusion, the middle of the year saw an ebullition of feeling that proved to every thinking South African that the Empire and the native question were not the only pebbles on his problem-strewn beach. Early in July a serious riot broke out on the Witwatersrand, reaching its culmination on the 4th. Thanks to the personal intervention of the Prime Minister and General Smuts, the Golden City was saved an even greater catastrophe.

The first organized conflict between miners and their employers had occurred in May 1907, *i.e.*, shortly after the Botha ministry took over from Lord Selborne, under the Bannerman Constitution. Until then the miners, nearly all of British birth, had shown themselves to be anti-Boer, in emulation of the magnates. Chinese importation, however, had created suspicion; the solidarity between workers and owners, dating back to pre-Boer war days, and rooted in racial feeling, vanished. On May 2, 1907, trouble arose at the Knights Deep Mine; soon the Village Deep, Crown Deep, and other properties were affected. The issue was whether one white man was to supervise three drills—instead of two, as hitherto—thus reducing the proportion between white overseers and native miners. On the outbreak of the strike, the mine owners employed new men, and evicted strikers from their quarters. The Government, which in those days was often supported by the few Labour members in the House, appointed a

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committee to inquire into the cause of the strike, especially the mistakes made by both sides.

The quarrel did not disorganize general labour conditions on the Rand, but had nevertheless a far-reaching sequel. The oversea-born miners had always been very jealous of their practical monopoly on the goldfields. They refused to tolerate the introduction of South African born men in the mines. Annually they used to send 'home' a couple of million pounds, representing their savings. As soon as the strike began, a number incontinently left the Rand, and were as promptly replaced by South Africans. Thus it was that the country Boer began to penetrate the industry, resulting in a complete change, within a few years, in economic and political conditions on the Rand.

The 1913 Revolt.—The unrest of June 1913 was of a particularly violent character. Perhaps it should be regarded as a symptom of the tension all over the world shortly before the Great War. On May 26 the strike had begun, after a dispute as to the working conditions of five underground men at the Kleinfontein, which was controlled by Sir George Farrar, leading Rand financier and politician. On May 28 the management offered to take back all the strikers. On June 6 this offer was repeated to all those who might choose to return before June 11; thirty-one did return. On June 12 the management met a committee of strikers, offering to take back as many as practicable, and to find work for the remainder elsewhere. The fifty strike-breakers would, however, not be sacked. This offer was turned down the same day. A movement to express sympathy with those who had not been restored to their jobs invaded the whole of the industrial area; on June 29 there was an outburst at Benoni, the strikers gaining the upper hand. British troops—placed at the disposal of the Government by Lord Gladstone—were posted at another part of the goldfields, the East Rand Proprietary Mines, also controlled by Sir George Farrar. The retention of British regiments had, so far, been treated by an autonomous Union—which should, of course, look

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after its own defence by land and sea—as a not altogether unwelcome anomaly.

As soon as the trouble spread to Johannesburg proper, matters became alarming. The day and night of July 4, when arson, looting of stores where firearms were sold, and street fighting succeeded one another, will always stand out as a disgraceful page in the annals of the Golden City's brief but fascinating history. The casualties amounted to at least twenty-one dead, seven badly and forty slightly wounded. The chiefs of the mining industry left the city when their offices were threatened by the maddened crowd.

Truculent multitudes occupied the central wards of the town, and no one knew what July 5 might bring forth. At this stage, Botha and Smuts decided to intervene personally; they unhesitatingly motored from Pretoria to Johannesburg —thirty-five miles. Approaching the Rand, they had to proceed warily, for wherever they were recognized, their welcome was by no means a cordial one. After having consulted the police, they left for the Carlton Hotel, where they met four delegates from the Federation of Trade Unions, whose Committee numbered forty-six. The President, A. Watson, was one of the four, with J. T. Bain as the principal spokesman.

The meeting was held in extraordinary surroundings; the streets on all four sides of the hotel were crowded with excited people. Angry cries gave indications as to the danger of the situation. The main entrance was guarded by a *posse* of constables with loaded rifles. The negotiators had revolvers, with the exception of Botha and his private secretary, Dr Bok. The city, and in fact the whole of the Rand, stood pretty well at the mercy of the mob.

The Bain 'Treaty.'—It did not take long to patch up a settlement, which will go down to history as the Bain Treaty. It was agreed that the Kleinfontein strikers were to be reinstated; the 'scabs' to be dismissed would be compensated by the Government. Strikers on other mines would not be interfered with; the workers' grievances were to be submitted to the authorities for inquiry. Care would be

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taken of victims' families, and the Department of Justice was to close one eye after the restoration of order. Meanwhile "an armistice" of twenty-four hours was proclaimed.

The four returned to the Federation offices, in order to get their Committee to ratify the agreement. Botha and Smuts went to the Orange Grove Hotel, just outside the town, for a discussion with the mine owners concerned. In the street their car was stopped. "You can shoot," Botha said, "we are unarmed. But know this, that we are here to make peace for you people, and that if we are shot, all that is finished!"

They recommended the 'treaty' to the consideration of the mining companies. It has been said that they found the magnates in a state of panic. That is not so. Sir G. Farrar, for one, wanted to return with the Ministers to the Carlton Hotel, but Botha would not hear of it, having good reason to fear that Sir George would not survive the trip.

It did not take Botha and General Smuts long to get back to the hotel. They were unescorted. The agreement was signed, sealed, and delivered. When Parliament met, General Smuts confessed to having felt deeply humiliated by having to put his name to such a document on July 5.

Almost a Tragedy.—When the negotiations were all but over, a tragedy was narrowly averted. One of the four Federation men went on to the balcony, where he tried to convey by gestures that matters were shaping well. The crowd pushed forward in order to make out what he had to say. The constables below, who could not see the balcony, suspected an attack on the hotel, and prepared for resistance. The crowd began to shout wildly, and was ready to take flight. A terrible cry went up from the horrified spectators. Fortunately, Colonel Truter, Chief Commissioner of Police, rushed to the balcony, and told the constables to lower their rifles. The revolt had been quelled. The whole country breathed more freely as the result of the ministerial visit became known.

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It had gradually become apparent that those who, in politics, represented the Labour Party had little or no influence with the miners and their trades union sympathizers, by whom they were ignored as negotiators between Government and the infuriated crowd. The spirit of unrest, however, continued to agitate the country; it was strengthened to a great extent by overseas events, which were being closely watched by the Labour leaders of that day. In January 1914 another strike broke out, this time among railwaymen who objected to alleged retrenchment schemes. It looked as if the whole country—especially Capetown, Durban, and the Rand—was about to be visited by a general industrial upheaval. Quickly the burghers in the rural districts were mobilized for the guarding of railway communications and the protection of the gold-fields population from any threat by the natives. General de la Rey had his guns trained on the Johannesburg Trades Hall. Nine strike leaders were secretly deported, before the Courts got time to decide on the legality of their arrest.

His actions in those days earned for Botha the reputation among his opponents of being the inventor of the *platskiet politiek*, which means a policy of shooting people down ruthlessly. By nature he was one who knew how to enforce authority: in the family circle, on his farm, amid shot and shell, and at his office. To obey the law, to respect a compact, was his instinct. As a farmer he had come into contact but little with organized industrial conditions, but he had witnessed the useful work of trade unions. He knew Labour politicians, too, thoroughly realizing what they stood for in the fabric of South African society, both as regards their strong points and their drawbacks. It may not be forgotten that during the period of the two strikes mentioned the railway service and the mining industry formed a closed circle, the chiefs of which were not accustomed to consult their Government at times when circumstances called for it.

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XXXIII

BOTHA AND THE NATIVES

ACCUSTOMED from childhood to exercise authority over natives, Botha became familiar with the warlike methods as well as peace customs of the Zulus—in those days the best type of South African aborigine. He spoke a couple of Bantu languages fluently, and chiefly studied the pragmatic aspect of the relationship between white and black. It has already been related in earlier chapters how he owed his life to a well-aimed bullet when, during the Dinizulu-Usibepu war, one of the latter's warriors wanted to kill him with an assegai, and how, but for Botha's presence of mind and courage, Mapelo (Usibepu's officer) would probably not have spared the young man when the *impi* came to take away his sheep.

Under the "New Republic" he had done the work of a native commissioner. When the South African Republic needed a few officials in order to put things straight in Swaziland, Botha was one of the men sent, leaving behind him, as he had done in Zululand, pleasant recollections. Ordinarily, white men are given descriptive nicknames by the natives; Botha, however, was invariably addressed or spoken of as "Lewies"—pronounced *Leveess*, which is the Zulu pronunciation of his Christian name, Louis. During the Boer war, when everything was topsy-turvy, the Swazis observed the neutrality he enjoined on them. Kaffir chiefs in other parts, where he was sometimes compelled to fight or retreat, invariably respected and feared him. When he had to pass a native village at night, at the head of his men, he did not interfere with the inhabitants, knowing that this passivity on his part would make them refrain from reporting him to the enemy the next morning.

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On being called to the helm of State he continued to direct native affairs, to the satisfaction of his colleagues, who gladly recognized his superior knowledge and experience. The corner-stone of his policy was the retention of political power—if possible for ever—by the whites, both as a matter of self-preservation and for the sake of the natives themselves. His second principle was that it does not pay to treat natives badly, any more than it will to enable them to interfere in the white man's concerns. All this was on the old, approved Boer lines, which did not systematically exclude natives from industrial employment.

The Colour Bar.—One day, in 1906, I dropped in on Botha at his tiny office in one of Pretoria's office-buildings and found him in converse with a rather corpulent native in formal black attire. "Colleague of yours!" Botha said. It appeared the visitor was the editor of the leading native paper in Cape Colony. Although Botha at that time had not yet attained to any position of official authority, the native politician considered it well to get into touch with the budding statesman. I listened to the discussion. When the journalist had gone, Botha gave me the benefit of his views on the industrial aspect of the native problem. He was by no means a thorough-going advocate of the colour bar, so often arrogantly demanded by Labour circles.

Botha's sound insight was proved by his opposition to Chinese importation on the ground that South Africa was able to supply an adequate native labour supply for the mines as well as other employers. When the experts, who danced to the tune called by Lord Milner, had rejected Botha's statements after inquiry, it was not found possible to keep more than 70,000 natives together in the gold mines. Only a couple of years later, when Botha was in power, there were no less than 185,500! During the early stages of the National Convention in 1908, some of its members were inclined to stand up for an extension of the Cape system, which included native franchise. Botha, however, stressed the fact that they had not met in order to settle the native question. Successfully he urged that unification of

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the four Colonies would incidentally benefit the Bantu race, and that lack of confidence in the white man's rule would lead to disaster. He opposed any native franchise in the northern Provinces.

Dinizulu Sheltered.—His first act as Union Premier was to release Dinizulu, who had been imprisoned by the Natal authorities in 1909. The Boer war had, *i.a.*, banefully affected the native *moral*. The Zulus were restive. In consequence of the dismemberment of the Transvaal in 1902, and the annexation of Vryheid to Natal, Dinizulu—who had always had the support of the Boers—lost prestige. His opponents challenged him, and in 1906 disorder began. Maritzburg mobilized a force, which included British troops from the Transvaal and Natal volunteers. A punitive expedition against the Zulus, with everything it involved, was undertaken. Native unrest spread, and in the course of 1907 Botha wrote to Sir F. Moor, the Natal Premier, suggesting a way of putting an end to the trouble.

Public opinion in Cape Colony and at Pretoria became articulate. In Transvaal Government circles the question arose: What was to be the attitude in case Dinizulu fled for protection to Botha, who, twenty years since, had assisted at his coronation? Fears as to the conflagration spreading from Natal to Basutoland were not without foundation. Those who—without being pro- or anti-Dinizulu—felt that Maritzburg had tackled the whole affair in the wrong way could not fail to see that the recklessness of the weakest of the four Colonies—which depended for its safety on either England or the other three—was imperilling the whole of the sub-continent.

At last Natal listened to reason. Meanwhile—in 1907—Dinizulu had been captured; two years later he was condemned to a term of imprisonment. In June 1910 Botha conditionally released him, allocating for his use a farm in the district of Middelburg (Transvaal), where he could reside in safety. This act of clemency greatly impressed the whole of South Africa, the natives in particular.

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Plainly they saw that Botha was master in the sub-continent, putting matters right, now that he had the power. Plainly, too, they observed that Botha protected his ally of a quarter of a century ago.

Territorial Segregation.—South Africa as a whole postponed dealing with the native problem until 1910. Some of Botha's opponents went about assuring the people that they carried a cut-and-dried solution in their pockets. He himself openly deprecated the tendency to dwell on matters of detail, while the intention existed to settle a vital political issue by a Napoleonic measure. He shied at an attempt to remove existing anomalies by steps that seemed likely to undermine permanently the whole of our institutions. He was prepared, however, at the instance of Mr Piet Grobler —at present Minister of Lands—and other members of Parliament, to introduce a Bill prohibiting both whites and natives from purchasing ground promiscuously. The measure was to determine what parts of the Union were to be demarcated as white and black areas respectively, for the purposes of land tenure.

That established the legislative principle of territorial segregation; it now remained to effect the demarcation. In 1917 a Bill, due to Sir William Beaumont, was introduced. This energetic, talented Natal ex-judge drafted—with the aid of General L. A. S. Lemmer and other experts—a scheme for the division of South Africa as contemplated. It looked acceptable enough, but was turned down by the native spokesmen. The 1920 Act, establishing local native councils, as well as the 1921 provision for periodical native conferences, tallied perfectly with Botha's formulated views. He continued to oppose native representation in Parliament, just as much as he shook his head when the absolute exclusion of natives, anywhere and for all time, from any skilled labour whatever was urged.

A good many well-meaning people have become persuaded that natives dislike control by Boer statesmen. This conviction has no facts to support it. Apprehension as to 1910 being destined to mark a new, and ill-starred,

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departure in the status of the natives was equally unjustified. Botha never posed as a negrophilist, or a benefactor of the tribes. Neither did he put his faith in magic formulæ in settling native affairs. The natives, however, know how to appraise a man's value; and without exception they placed full confidence in Botha.

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XXXIV

BOTHA AND THE GREAT WAR

WHEN German troops violated Belgian neutrality, thus endangering Britain's safety, the United Kingdom entered the War, but the Dominions had already been warned as soon as the situation became really critical—on August 1, 1914. General and Mrs Botha intended visiting the Congo State and were travelling in Rhodesia; the Premier wanted to have a look at the country that had sent delegates to the National Convention of 1908. Hurriedly, the anxious tourists returned to Pretoria. While there was nothing surprising in the prospect of the Union joining the large number of participants in Armageddon, Botha was not at all sure of South Africa's temper in such a contingency.

Internal conditions were disturbed and complicated, in contrast with those of the other Dominions. Our one and a half million whites were anything but unanimous or harmonious as to the policy that best suited the circumstances. There was an openly pro-German element; in addition, many, without being in any way Germanophile, were anything but keen to support England, France, or Russia. During the Boer war, not more than fifteen years since, public opinion in Germany had sided against Britain. Notwithstanding the Kaiser's refusal to invite President Kruger to Berlin in 1900, and despite the fact that his Majesty had offered Queen Victoria a plan of campaign against the Boers—as had become publicly known in 1908—anti-British circles in the Union did not care to realize that new conditions no longer permitted of oversea powers attempting to draw South Africa within their sphere of influence. The strengthening of neighbouring German territories was essentially a consummation unwelcome to

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the South African interest, although many people did not understand that a South African might in 1914 approve the expedition to Windhoek without being a rabid Germanophobe!

Before long, the British section in the Union naturally felt its military enthusiasm boiling over; there was no hesitation in demanding material assistance to the 'Mother Country' even in the shape of compulsory service overseas. Generally speaking, the Dutch realized the Union's obligations as part of the Empire; but they did not at once feel any overwhelming desire to leap into the fray. In some parts of the country, again, they were only too ready to fight—but on the wrong side! In view of these differences, a wise statesman's duty was to avoid internal conflicts in order to avert the danger of civil war. The Government therefore was careful not to rush matters. It was well advised in adopting a moderate attitude, combined with the most unambiguous position on the side of the Allies.

A Passive Onlooker.—In Parliament Government was fairly assured of the support of both Opposition groups (forty-one Unionists, four Labour men) who represented the British section exclusively. The handful of Nationalists, however, was sure to refuse co-operation, and to advocate a policy of passive onlooking. Who—so the quidnuncs among them argued—could prophesy on what side success was going to be? The Germans did well for the first five weeks; not until September 9, 1914, when Parliament was opened at Capetown, did the battle of the Marne put an end to the enemy's triumphant invasion of France: the character of operations in Western Europe was radically changed. Although Botha felt strong enough in the Assembly for complete control of the situation—the Government party had a little more than fifty seats—no one could tell how the feelings that were agitating the whole of the country might react on members of Parliament. The Prime Minister, not unnaturally, was in hopes of being left to his own devices for the time being. There was so much highly inflammable material within that any

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action from without was unwanted. This explains the absence of any glowing cables from Pretoria, offering help to London.

On August 4, when the British Ambassador was recalled from Berlin, the Botha Government sent a cablegram, recognizing the Union's obligations in case of hostilities and undertaking the defence of its territory. If, it said, the British garrisons remaining in South Africa were required elsewhere, the Union would be pleased to let its own Defence Force replace those garrisons, for the duties entrusted to Imperial troops in South Africa. What did this last phrase imply? That the Union stood ready for its own defence? Or was an offensive contemplated as a possibility? Botha had the former interpretation in mind; London took hold of the latter. On August 7 it answered, thankfully accepting the offer to free the garrisons.

Later in the same day, however, a further cable arrived, requesting the occupation of so much of South-west Africa as would control the two ports (Swakopmund and Luederitzbucht) together with any wireless stations. This was regarded by the British Government as a "great and urgent Imperial service," on the understanding that the territory thus to be occupied was to remain at the Imperial Government's disposal, until definite arrangements should have been made at the conclusion of peace.

This request was unexpected—almost unwelcome even, in view of the military aspect of the enterprise. South-west Africa, with a surface as large as France, is extremely arid. And, in addition, there was the increasing tension among inhabitants of the Union. Botha was not at all in a hurry to convene the Cabinet in order to convey the message; he wanted to ponder the situation first. Ministers were not bent on assuming the *rôle* of conquerors; not theirs the ambition to shift another's beacons! Yet it was virtually impossible to refuse, even to those who wanted to study South African interests merely. The Premier, with his usual perspicacity, foresaw the opposition among part of the people to a South-west expedition. Late in the

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evening of the day on which the request had reached him, he asked a tried friend of his whether the latter would promise to take part in the affair. The Premier mentioned his presentiment as to the Commandant-General, Beyers, being unwilling to help. Botha, in fact, predicted the latter's resignation; he foresaw unrest, possibly violence, on the part of some of his people; and without delay he resolved to assume chief command in the march to Windhoek.

Two days later another cablegram from London arrived, emphasizing the urgent nature of the matter, and the strategic importance of the Windhoek wireless, which was in constant touch with Germany as well as German warships. What, however, did the average Union citizen know of either the South-west as a whole or the wireless question? Nobody worried about the possible appearance of German cruisers in Union waters. Yet the Government could not refuse. On August 10 Ministers reported that they would cordially co-operate with the Imperial Government on the lines mentioned, provided England supplied all necessary marine transport.

This weighty decision had to be taken without Parliament being consulted, for a Session could not be held until after the lapse of at least three or four weeks. This has been held up to Botha as a reproach, but unjustly. A decision had to be come to on the spot; the second cable from London did not brook any further delay. The Government had to risk an adverse vote in Parliament; and Ministers agreed with the Premier that, if it came, they would resign.

At one time it was alleged that the release of the British garrisons was intended to convey the impression to part of the people that the Government at Pretoria contemplated a declaration of neutrality. Botha, some stated, wanted to mislead the public in that way, by appearing to adhere to a position of neutrality, whilst all the time intending to throw off the mask by pointing to German aggression, which would justify hostilities, even though the Germans had not harmed

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the Boers! Such insinuations are merely absurd. Botha's consistent standpoint had been that in the pre-1914 Empire no portion could remain neutral while another portion was at war. He never made a secret of his views regarding Imperial relationships, which were continually modified by developments after 1914. Toward the middle of 1911, when the Pretoria *Volkstem* made a sensational plea for the right of the Dominions to neutrality, Botha—who was then taking the waters at Kissingen—roundly stated in an interview with a British journalist that, according to constitutional law as affecting the Empire, Dominion neutrality in a war involving England was simply unthinkable; moreover, he said, no enemy would respect it. Holding such opinions as these, Botha had no alternative but to treat South-west Africa as enemy territory. Keeping the Union's best interests in view, he decided to comply with the London request.

Volunteers or Pressed Men.—The question arose at once: How is the South-west campaign to be carried on? With volunteers or with Defence Force troops? The 1912 Defence Act provides for personal service, in defence of the Union, in any part of South Africa, either within or without the Union; this principle pervades the Act. At first the Government felt inclined to employ the most efficient fighting force, *i.e.* the Union army, which was of recent birth. It soon became apparent, however, that there would be a plethora of volunteers in case an appeal were made. Apart from the composition of an expeditionary force, the Government had without delay to establish a military organization for the safeguarding of internal safety, once the English garrisons had left. As a matter of course, it wanted to utilize for this purpose members of the Defence Force—who were obliged to serve—and not volunteers.

Upon the inclusion of a military district bordering on South-west Africa among the districts whose Active Citizen Force was mobilized for field duties, the cavillers could not help imagining that those who were liable to serve would be used, *i.a.*, for the occupation of enemy territory. Soon

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after the ratification by Parliament of the Government's decision regarding the campaign, Botha clearly announced that volunteers only would constitute the expeditionary force. By that time, however, the evil had already been done; the objection to compulsory participation in the march to Windhoek had had its pernicious effect. Immediately, commandants were convened; Botha and Smuts (as Defence Minister) met them in order to explain that the Active Citizen Force was being called out because of the impending departure of garrisons. The only person who was at once informed of the Cabinet's South-west decision was Beyers, Commandant-General.

De la Rey Becomes Uneasy.—Within very little time, things were at sixes and sevens. General de la Rey sent round messengers with the customary order for the burghers (of Lichtenburg district) to meet at Treurfontein on August 15, mounted. De la Rey was a senator; although he had all the while filled public offices, he had never been able to reconcile himself to the loss of Boer independence. The outbreak of the Great War had affected his mind to such an extent that he could no longer think logically. It is well known that his own son-in-law had ceased to regard him as accountable for his actions in those disturbed days, and considered it necessary to have him looked after. Botha called his old comrade-at-arms to Pretoria; assisted by General Smuts, Schalk Burger, and Mr N. J. de Wet, K.C., he succeeded in calming the distraught old man. The discussion was a painful one to all present, but especially to De la Rey himself. It was a sad disappointment to him to find that neither Botha nor yet any of those others had for a moment contemplated leading a movement that—in view of England's difficulties—could end only in an attempt to restore the two Republics. Throughout the night Botha wrestled with De la Rey, arguing as follows: "It may be God's will to give South Africa back its liberty; but it can never be His intention to bring this about along the road of dishonour and treason." Now and then they knelt together in a long prayer.

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Many people shared De la Rey's feelings and were intensely indignant, not only at Botha's sincerity during years of a broad South African propaganda, but also because he had not succeeded in carrying conviction of that sincerity to the nation at large. Botha has been held up widely as the man who is chiefly responsible for the outbreak of the Rebellion, because he is supposed to have been remiss in proving conclusively that he was not quite the hypocrite the irreconcilables had believed him to be!

On the day after De la Rey's pathetic visit to Botha, the first meeting of commandants was held. The Premier refused to allow the desirability of a Windhoek campaign to be discussed, because Parliament still had to decide that question. Half a dozen officers agreed with General Beyers, who was against any expedition, however organized —not for military but for political reasons. The following day De la Rey appeared at the Treurfontein meeting, where a great crowd, with potentialities for any kind of mischief, had gathered. People, however, allowed themselves to be persuaded, and calmly returned to their homes. Botha then called a second meeting of commandants, including those from the Free State.

On August 26 the first Congress of the National (Hertzog) Party met at Pretoria; unanimously the contemplated expedition to South-west Africa was condemned. One of the members of the Nationalist Head Committee openly stated that he expected Botha and Smuts to rebel as soon as they judged the moment to be propitious! Throughout the four years of extraordinary tension that characterized the War, the Union authorities never interfered with the constitutional liberty of the subject; everyone was allowed frankly to air his opinion on men and things, in the newspapers as well as on the platform. While the Nationalists were loudly protesting against participation in the War, the occupation of German territory—secrecy concerning which could not be long maintained—was as energetically urged in other quarters of the Union as indispensable.

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Botha and his German Fellow-Citizens.—Until the end of the War, Botha staunchly supported the Allies; within the limits of the Union's delicate internal situation he helped to ensure victory. After putting down a rebellion in his own country, he conquered, during the first half of 1915, German South-west Africa. In 1916 General Smuts took command in East Africa; Botha assisted him in every possible way to carry through the campaign there, incidentally taking over the Defence portfolio from General Smuts for the time being. His Government, however, refused to confiscate the private property of enemy subjects, as effected by other powers. While Botha was campaigning in South-west Africa, semi-organized riots in connexion with the *Lusitania* disaster broke out at Johannesburg, Durban, Capetown, and elsewhere in May 1915. If a building was supposed to belong to a German, it was simply burned and looted. In some quarters these iniquities were applauded; the bulk of the people condemned them. Botha sent a strongly worded telegram from Karibib, demanding that non-combatants should refrain from gratuitous rioting while he and his forces were facing the German Empire in onerous circumstances.

The *Lusitania* outburst of war fever had its echoes in the Session of 1916, when recriminations were flung across the floor of the House, and a Select Committee of Inquiry was appointed. In April that year Botha wrote to a friend:

"The anti-German agitation continues, especially on the part of the 'British Citizen Movement.' Those johnnies are too funky to fight armed Germans, so they are bent upon ruining the unarmed ones, and wreaking their vengeance on poor women and children. I shall insist on protecting our German citizens. What I regret exceedingly is that our Germans did not follow my advice to lie low, and keep out of our political quarrels. Let them use their votes if they like, but not run the risk of joining a political party that includes a strong rebel section."

As military pressure increased, part of our population strongly advocated conscription for service overseas, or

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alternatively the payment of volunteers; this was as strongly opposed by the other faction. Botha never allowed himself to be used for the enforcement of either conscription or pay, but encouraged recruiting. His eldest son served in Flanders. When a shortage of dock labourers made itself felt in French ports, Botha arranged for the supply of ten thousand natives, stipulating that these would on no account be used for direct military operations. He knew well enough that the step would be taken strong exception to, but the result showed that the fuss made about it was not justified. Whatever measures had to be either taken or opposed, the Prime Minister always felt the burden of scorn and aspersion that a considerable proportion of his people never ceased to heap on him. Of all belligerent States, the Union possessed the least unity of soul and purpose. We differed from the rest of the warring nations in that party politics continued to play a most prominent part.

The Imperial Wool Scheme.—An instance is afforded by the British Government's offer of May 1917 to buy the whole of the wool clip 1917–18 at fifty-five per cent. above average rates ruling just before the War. Australia and New Zealand were glad to accept; in South Africa there was violent opposition. Just about this time Botha made a short stay at Rusthof for a little rest and avoidance of routine work. The department concerned had not tackled the matter in the most tactful way, creating the impression that the Imperial Government, aided by the Union authorities, intended commandeering the wool. In that way the proposed deal of course invaded the realm of politics. Nationalist sheep farmers were advised to have nothing to do with the scheme.

A few months later, London was notified that Pretoria did not see its way to get the whole of the clip available; part was already sold, and it was not held advisable to interfere with the export arrangements made by dealers. Thanks to strong representations by the Government, however, producers of one-third of the clip had been induced to accept the offer. And now the unexpected happened once more:

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suddenly, a greater number of vessels than had been anticipated were able to take cargo; America and Japan made extensive purchases, and South African wool fetched higher prices than the British Government had offered. The Opposition was jubilant! Pretoria, early in 1918, got London to let off the South African sheep farmers who had sold their wool to the Imperial Government. Those who preferred to come under the official scheme made nearly sixteenpence for their product.

During the whole of the Great War, Union politics offered the spectacle of raucous pandemonium, Government being cast for the part of buffer, to take blows from all sides. When General Smuts, after his military success in East Africa, became a member of the Imperial War Cabinet in London, his first speech in the Metropolis (April 2, 1917) contained these words:

> I feel on this occasion that South Africa is not putting her best foot forward. I could wish that General Botha was here to-day to be bracketed with Sir Robert Borden in reply to the toast of the Dominions, but unfortunately he could not be here. He is bearing a burden in South Africa which no other man can bear; and it is unfortunate in a certain sense that I have to take the place of my right hon. friend.

Botha's Sorrows.—As already stated, the Prime Minister had to hand over—to Mr F. S. Malan—during the winter of 1917, so that he himself might take a much-needed rest. Although he used to put a cheerful face on matters in public, his constitution was sapped and his vitality greatly reduced by the overwhelming responsibility of his official duties, and—last, not least—the fact that he was misunderstood and misrepresented by so many of his compatriots. Toward the end of the same year his condition was so serious that he shortly afterward wrote to a friend: "I was absolutely finished. I had given up hope entirely, thinking I should never see you people again; I felt that to go on living was an impossibility."

Even as he penned these lines, however, he already felt a wonderful improvement. Convinced that he was doing

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his duty by his country, he emancipated himself from doubt, thus escaping the psychological effect of the hatred and aversion that were concentrated on his person. He further wrote:

> I am very thankful to say that there has been a real and great improvement. For a month now I have had no pain whatever; my liver continues normal; the heart is strong; blood-pressure rather high, but better than it was; I walk up to nine miles a day, and ride three hours. This I am managing comfortably, and my weight regularly goes down by 3 lbs. per week. My mind is clear; I am full of ambition and schemes for a long life.

Eternal rest was his within two years of the date of this letter—just after he had done useful work at Paris, and represented at Versailles the South African dominion, which had become independent.

To Botha's guidance, military as well as political, South Africa owes the fact that the Great War brought it increased prosperity, instead of civil war bleeding it to death. His vigorous action was of incalculable service to the British Commonwealth, and contributed to the Union identifying itself with world events to a remarkably great extent, considering the smallness of its population. Botha's strength of will and enlightened policy conferred on our country its honourable, independent status by the side of Great Britain and her mighty Dominions.

Who can deny that without Botha the fortunes of our country would have been differently shaped! His was the genius that enabled South Africa to reach the proud position she now occupies. Was not he the medium as well for the creation of a united sub-continent as for its subsequent salvation from early disaster?

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XXXV

BOTHA IN SPECIAL SESSION

On September 9, 1914, Parliament met in Special Session at Capetown. Within five days both Assembly and Senate had agreed, by an overwhelming majority, to render active assistance to Great Britain by undertaking the expedition against South-west Africa. Had it not been for the powerful wireless station at Windhoek German territory north of the Orange might have been excluded from the direct sphere of British operations; in that case the Union might have contented itself with police patrols on the border. The Allied front was wide enough as it was. Once the occupation of the South-west had become strategically indispensable, the Union Government could not allow any other country's troops to undertake the task, for it was not in the interests of South Africa to give any overseas force an opportunity of replacing the German soldiery north of the Orange.

In Caucus.—It is customary at Capetown for Government supporters to meet in caucus in order to express their opinions of legislative measures, the introduction of which is contemplated. Caucus resolutions are binding on members of the Party. This method results in the closest argumentation sometimes taking place in camera, so that public debates degenerate into a formality, relieved only by objections, raised in all seriousness, by the Opposition. The majority, of course, has already discussed, and decided on, the fate of important measures. Perhaps this explains why Botha's Assembly speech dealing with the Union's attitude in the Great War fell short as regards inspiration and suggestive effect. It was superfluous to try and convince Parliament; that had already been done. In order

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to convince the nation, a concise appeal would have answered the purpose better than the elaborate oration the Prime Minister was tempted to deliver, and the weak points of which led to ironical criticism.

No one could reasonably expect of the Transvaal Commandant-General of twelve years before that, as Union Premier, he should be consumed by heart-stirring enthusiasm on behalf of altruistic Albion which, on Belgian neutrality being violated, had drawn the rest of the Empire into war without consultation. Even the most refractory faction would have been appealed to by cold logic, but especially by a clearly outlined programme of what South Africa was able, and willing, to accomplish. There is good reason to believe that the real debate took place in caucus, and that there was no lack of objections on the part of Government supporters; these objections disappeared only after cool discussion.

The resolution submitted by Botha in the Assembly places on record the Union's obligation, as part of the Empire, faithfully to support Britain during the war in which she had become involved; further to take all such measures as might be found necessary to safeguard Union interests, and to ensure its safety, in co-operation with the Imperial authorities. South Africa, Botha argued, formed part of the Empire; it was an ally within the Empire; *ergo*, as soon as the Empire went to war, South Africa *ipso facto* was embroiled. No other way was open, he declared —they had to choose between duty and honour on the one hand, desertion and disgrace on the other.

If—as no constitutional expert can deny—this correctly reflected the position of that day, where was the necessity of asking Parliament to place on record its loyalty? The Government could as well have confined itself to a debate on the financial and military aspects of the new situation. The Premier greatly stressed the national sense of honour, which should induce everyone, "in the hour of peril to stand by the Imperial Government." Many, however, were unable to rise to Botha's high level in this respect.

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Official information as to what would be expected of the Defence Force was as yet inadequate. The ministerial speech defined the object of mobilization as "taking over the duty of the British garrisons that had been recalled." Was not this rather vague? He further pointed out that a refusal of the British request to occupy South-west Africa would amount to ingratitude, whilst an abundance of arguments that suggested themselves remained unused. What the Government did say was that "the Defence Force would have to be mobilized." One was entitled to deduce from this that, in the campaign, others than volunteers would be used.

The speech was padded, perhaps somewhat gratuitously, with a minute description of a German patrol that had "violated" the Union border, somewhere in the sand desert; then there were theories as to the enemy's godless motives in starting the War, coupled with the undertaking to treat German-descended subjects of the Union with due consideration. To round off, it was stated that, as a proof of Imperial goodwill, the British Government would lend the Union seven millions, and that contributions to overseas charitable funds would be welcomed.

The flaw in Botha's argument was that South Africa was described as "free," but at the same time *ipso facto* a party to the War, and allied to the United Kingdom. In the second place, Botha omitted to accentuate the threat to the Union's own ocean routes, arising from the existence of the Windhoek wireless—Von Spee was not annihilated near the Falklands until December 8, 1914. In the third place, there was the neglect to point out that the Union could not permit any but our own troops to occupy the South-west. In the fourth place, the public was left in ignorance as to whether volunteers only would be used in the campaign, and whether the Defence Force would be sent out. Mention of the British loan, and of the Nakob *casus belli* (Nakob was the name of the famous police post in question), might just as well have been left out.

Two Opposition parties, through their leaders, supported

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GENERALS BOTHA AND DE LA REY IN THE GROUNDS OF PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, CAPETOWN, SEPTEMBER 1914

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the Premier's motion. General Hertzog described it as unexpected; he moved to resolve that the Union would be ready to repel any attack, but that any aggression toward South-west Africa would clash with the Union's best interests. This was negatived by ninety-two to twelve. Thus "national honour" defeated "national interests." The Senate, too, adopted Botha's resolution. Many people were under the impression that Parliament intended to conduct the campaign with commandeered men; Botha very soon gained the conviction that an army of volunteers would not only be politic, but could be organized without much difficulty.

Was the Government's action really of an unexpected nature? War rumours had been in the air for a long time. Our Prime Minister had consistently proclaimed that Imperial relationships being what they then were, the Dominions could not expect an enemy of Britain to respect any declaration of neutrality, even if constitutionally feasible.

An Undesirable Neighbour.—In addition, Botha was one of those who did not regard the German Empire as a desirable neighbour. This was even apart from the fact that Berlin had as it were surrounded the South-west by a Chinese Wall, obstinately shutting it off from the rest of the sub-continent; commercial as well as other contact with the Union was absolutely discouraged. Dernburg, German Colonial Secretary in 1908, in vain approached Merriman—during a visit to South Africa in that year—about a railway from Walvis Bay—which was Cape territory—not to mention an attempt to obtain a lease over the port. Botha, on that occasion, wrote to the Cape Premier: "It is our opinion, over here, that Germany's influence in South Africa should not be allowed to increase. As for me, I shall never encourage any scheme tending to do so."

At about the same time General Smuts wrote to Capetown: "From the point of view of South Africa's future, the German Empire is no desirable neighbour."

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And now that the South-west had become, from a merely indifferent and not exactly desirable neighbour, a hostile one—without the Union Government being in any way to blame—Botha considered himself entirely justified—keeping Union interests in view—in complying with the British request for occupation.

Hertzog's opinion that it was directly to the advantage of South Africa not to go beyond defensive measures is an interpretation of "national interest" that certainly is entitled to consideration. It was by no means extravagantly conceived, but neither did it fit into positive Imperial constitutional law, A.D. 1914; above all, it entirely failed to take into account the war-time psychology of his English-speaking fellow-citizens. Parliament's decision properly to support the Government was afterward proved to have served the national interest.

In those days of panic the Botha Cabinet certainly was not guilty of undue hurry, as will appear from a comparison with the actions of other Dominions. Whereas it waited until August 4 before undertaking to defend South Africa in the absence of British garrisons, Canada as early as August 1 offered "every possible assistance." Whilst the request in connexion with the South-west campaign was not assented to until August 10, the British Government on the 6th had accepted the Canadian offer immediately to mobilize an army for oversea service. On September 9 the Union Parliament began to sit; on August 18 the Canadian Parliament assembled, and four months later it had 212,700 volunteers under arms.

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XXXVI

BOTHA AND THE REBELLION

MATTERS had gone fairly well, so far. Part of the forces had been mobilized and were training in camps. General Lukin was at Ramansdrift, Orange River, with Maritz farther east, at Kakamas. Trouble did not really begin until after the Session. The five years that Botha still had to live were to be brimful of bitter experiences and profound sorrow, hardly outweighed by the eventual realization of his heart's desire: a completely independent South Africa, defensively allied with other powerful States. His official worries, which continued without intermission, were bound in the long run to affect his constitution and undermine his health.

September 15, 1914.—On the day of the occupation of Luderitzbucht by Mackenzie (September 15) General Beyers suddenly resigned as Commandant-General, by way of protest against the attitude of Government and Parliament. Quite likely he acted according to the tradition current in Transvaal Republican days, when the Commandant-General was not merely a military functionary confining himself to passive obedience to the orders of his Government but one undoubtedly obliged to exercise his influence in the political field. Late in the evening of the same day, the news of De la Rey's death shocked the whole of South Africa. The ill-starred bullet of a constable had caused the accident. In connexion with the chase of some fugitive criminals orders had been given to fire on any motor that was not stopped when challenged. This happened in General De la Rey's case. On September 20 Botha arrived at Lichtenburg after a lightning journey from Capetown, so as to attend the funeral of his old comrade. Under dramatic

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circumstances he addressed the multitude; he quite understood that part of the public easily led themselves to believe that the Government—or else he, personally—was to blame for the sensational fatality, and had perhaps even incited criminal schemes.

His stay at Lichtenburg was not unattended by some risk. People were wrought up to such a pitch that the suspicion of stealthy assassination commended itself to many; even prominent politicians openly discussed it. The same Louis Botha who, but ten years ago, had been acclaimed as a Father to his people was now detested as an evil-doer by a number of them. Before leaving Lichtenburg he interviewed commandants and other mourners, assuring them that the South-west campaign would be conducted with volunteers only, and that he himself had decided to take command. He had hoped that this resolution would be taken as a well-meant attempt to remove disappointment at Beyers' resignation. On the following day a notice was published everywhere in the Union confirming the voluntary character of the expedition against the Germans.

This intelligence came not a day too soon. On the same date, September 21, Generals Beyers, De Wet, and Kemp met at Lichtenburg, where they published a well-thought-out document demanding the cessation of hostilities and the recall of all Union troops. There is reason to assume that Beyers was primarily moved by the desire to prevent South Africa committing itself in an anti-German direction, and to stop active warfare. The other two most likely desired to restore the independence of the Boer Republics. It should not be forgotten that, in the beginning, the fortunes of war, in Europe, had appeared to favour the Central Powers; the assumption was justified that it would soon be all over, to the detriment of the group of States whose part had been taken by the Union Government.

A few days after the Lichtenburg manifesto, De Wet commenced to get busy in the Free State, both privately and at public meetings. Botha, on his part, uninterruptedly mobilized. A fresh meeting of commandants at

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Pretoria was enlightened by Botha on the new situation, *i.e.* the enrolment of volunteers to fight under himself as Commander-in-Chief. Thirty-five prominent officers were present; only fifteen were required for active service. Botha asked those who were prepared to follow him to say so. On the spot all, without exception, offered themselves. They even promised that all those who were not among the fifteen to whom a command could be given would take part in the campaign as privates! It will be plain that Botha had not been abandoned by all his compatriots.

Defective Arguments.—After the commandants, it was the public's turn to obtain a *viva voce* explanation by the Premier of the national situation. On September 28 thousands gathered near Bank (in Botha's constituency) south-west of Krugersdorp. This time his speech was to the point, and he took the nation into his confidence. He told them that, failing occupation of South-west Africa by the Union, England would be compelled to effect it, with either Indian or Australian troops. It was surely better to send volunteers from South Africa itself! In practice we could not maintain neutrality, even though legally such a thing was permissible. Britain had counted on the good faith of the Dutch, and it was an obligation of honour to render aid, Afrikanders once having grasped the outstretched hand of the British section.

About the middle of October Maritz's treason, committed near the German border, made it necessary to proclaim martial law. People were getting more and more excited; not a few lost all self-control and judgment. The Dutch Reformed Church of Cape Colony deemed it advisable to publish a message, warning against treason. Everywhere, however, turbulence increased. A prey to war-time psychology, General De Wet found it impossible to remain passive. With a varying measure of success he addressed the Transvaal and Free State public, forming a small committee to act as the mouthpiece of those disaffected with the Government.

In the Free State they had been clever enough to discover

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a way out of the *impasse*! If only Botha resigned the premiership, all would be well. Others pinned their faith to an immediate general election! On October 14 the committee mentioned had an interview lasting four and a half hours with Botha, the upshot being that he refused either to stop the campaign or to resign. That, at any rate, showed people how matters stood. A few days later Commandant-General Botha was presented with a flag by a number of ladies; in his speech he pessimistically alluded to the prospect of civil war; he asserted the inviolable authority of Parliament as completely justifying his action.

The incipient rebellion could, alas, no longer be ignored. General Smuts tackled his duty as Minister of Defence thoroughly. At the capital and in other cities a sufficient number of troops was left for protection. The army in the field, which had to operate in three regions, far from each other, consisted of seven thousand men who had always been liable to serve, in addition to twenty-five thousand burghers, few of whom had been commandeered. Botha insisted on excluding, as far as practicable, English-speaking citizens; he wanted to prevent people from identifying the repression of the rebellion with any idea of racialism; he finally resolved to command the Union troops himself, trusting that this would keep many of the half-hearted out of the revolt. London offered to send thirty thousand Australian troops, on the way to Europe, for service in South Africa; but the Government at Pretoria did not accept the offer, stating in its reply that its own people would put down the rebels.

From Damhoek to Hoenderkop.—Maritz, in his distant frontier district, was defeated on October 24; he had to take refuge in enemy territory. Botha meanwhile took his forces to the Rustenburg and Pretoria districts, not far from the seat of government. At Damhoek, in the Magaliesberg, Beyers had gathered many malcontents around him. On taking leave of his wife, Botha complained that, whilst they two had known many a solemn leave-taking, this one oppressed him more than had ever been the

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case. In vain he sent out negotiators to the insurgents. Without any incident of historical importance this particular group was dispersed or captured. But the leaders, Beyers and Kemp, escaped.

The Commandant-General was able to return to Pretoria, leaving the pacification of Transvaal districts to his subordinate officers. His care and attention were required farther south, for De Wet was busy in the Free State, preaching restoration of the Republics by force. His followers became more numerous and obtained arms. In the north-eastern districts he was pretty well in control. At Vrede he arrested the magistrate.

Botha left Pretoria on November 9. Five days later there was fighting at Hoenderkop (Mushroom Valley), sixty miles north-east of Bloemfontein, where De Wet had concentrated his men. He had not the slightest misgivings. The homestead on the farm was connected by telephone, and the occupant was all the time talking to Botha's staff, with De Wet chatting just two hundred yards away, leaning against a telephone pole! Three hundred of his men were captured; the others were energetically pursued, and all their transport was taken. De Wet himself made good his escape. For how long? The back of the rebellion was broken, and the Commandant-General was able to go elsewhere.

Kemp's Mounted Men.—There was a bone to pick at the German border. Botha, without resting, took train to Upington (*via* Kimberley), from whence the pursuit of Kemp was being conducted. The latter had fled from the district of Rustenburg with about seven hundred horse. Managing to reach the Kalahari desert, he entered a waterless country, with Union troops at his heels, hoping to get to the Germans. On November 28 he succeeded. By this brilliant exploit General Kemp and his companions introduced an epic element into a period full of afflicting events.

On the following day Botha returned to the Free State where, on November 30, he met General Smuts in order to

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confer on the coming South-west campaign. That over, he once more took the field against the rebel commandos still in the Free State. Most of the rebels had surrendered, thanks to a promise of amnesty by Botha, to all those who came in by November 21. On December 8 two of the most prominent leaders had given themselves up.

Then it was that Botha, physically exhausted and sick at heart, hastened to his Standerton farm; in solitude, and respited, for the moment, from his ministerial duties, he sought relaxation and the requisite strength for further military service. And on December 8 also Beyers found his death in the rising waters of Vaal River. Botha felt deeply this tragic event.

Right until the end of December stray rebels were made prisoners, whereas others surrendered. On the 2nd General De Wet himself was captured at Waterbury, in Bechuanaland. He considered it a privilege that it was one of his own people (Colonel Jordaan) who disarmed him and his escort of fifty. Thus ended the Rebellion, a military episode occupying barely six weeks; in Botha's life these counted as years. The whole country was grateful to the Commandant-General for the rapid, determined and yet humane manner in which he caused law and order to be vindicated. When the time came for tempering justice with mercy, the country once more unanimously applauded the Government's decisions.

Among the Boers women as well as men know how to approach extremes of national inflexibility; their intensely passionate patriotism is quite sufficient explanation of the fact that, barely twelve years and three months after Vereeniging, part of them succumbed to the temptation of trying to regain their lost independence by force of arms. Was not the treaty of 1902 wrung from them with pointed revolver! And was Campbell-Bannerman's blessed balm calculated to heal all wounds, to right every wrong? To what extent had the rural population comprehended, in 1914, the salutary concomitants of recent unification, based on mutual confidence as to political integrity between

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Briton and Boer! The country districts adhered to ancestral tradition as regards instant response to the call for military service. How, then, could the young bloods turn a deaf ear to the seductive call of the veld ("Freedom at hand!"), egged on as they were by the blandishments of their womenfolk's language? Many of those who were youths in 1914 had been children in the concentration camps.

Instead of giving way to pained surprise and righteous indignation at the Rebellion, we should yield astonished admiration to the numerous ex-republicans who subordinated their natural feelings to their intelligence, by not merely repressing any desire of active revolt, but by seconding the Government in quickly subduing unrest and insurrection. The Rebellion was a revelation of mass psychology on the part of a susceptible national group. Such reactions are proof against any logic, any appeal to national honour and normal ratiocination. A section of the people had its reasoning powers numbed by a sequence of fatal events: the Hertzog crisis, the world conflagration, the tragic end of De la Rey.

Another contributory cause was the entire newness of our military system; minor officials, whose duty it was to assist in mobilizing the countryside, were not always judicious in selecting burghers for service, tactlessly indulging their predilections either in favour of or against any particular individual. It was a boon to the Union that a forceful figure, such as Botha was, could be depended upon in 1914, first to start saving the situation with vigour and despatch, and afterward to cure, so that the aftermath of the distemper might leave no more than faint scars.

Botha always took up the position that the incorporation by force of the Republics into the Empire was indefensible, but that subsequent events bound the people equally to respect and maintain the 1910 Constitution. Regarded in the perspective of history, the Rebellion itself is a minor incident. It is the vicissitudes from which our country was saved in those days, thanks to Botha, that will remain

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ever memorable; for there was more than one unruly section in the Union! South Africa is deserving of all praise for its early and complete pardon of the ill-advised leaders as well as the unfortunate rank and file in the Rebellion.

On their part, the rebels, without being particularly abject, recognized the error of their ways. The soul of Dutch-speaking South Africa for years smarted under the after-effects of tremendous shocks, such as the dramatic deaths of De la Rey and Beyers and the equally painful capture and sentence of Christiaan de Wet. So long as the crowd is swayed by violent emotions, attempts to gauge the true perspective of events remains hopeless. In such days passion and imagination run riot. No wonder that Botha was anathematized "bloodhound" and "traitor" by those able to handle libellous aspersions in such a way as to gain them credence.

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XXXVII

BOTHA AND THE SOUTH-WEST CAMPAIGN

WHO could have thought at Vereeniging, on May 31, 1902, that the Transvaal Commandant-General—with scarcely half a dozen "marauding bands" under him then!—was destined to be seen in less than thirteen years in command of a completely equipped force of fifty thousand—transports, motors, aeroplanes, and all! And further that this impromptu generalissimo, acting as a British ally, would within three months take a country as large as France from a European power, the Emperor of which had favoured a then friendly England with a plan of campaign against the Boers!

Botha's plan of campaign, as well as the manner of its execution, has been praised by experts as a masterpiece. The territory for the greater part consists of an inhospitable stretch of veld; along the few usable roads there is little water, and columns of any size can hardly operate together. Botha, however, took great risks, because he did not believe in the slower methods of small detachments, involving—in the long run—heavier tributes in men and money. With remarkable success he reached his goal, thanks to excellent strategy—as an expert has called it—and forced marches by his mounted troops. Naturally, things would not have gone so well but for the admirable energy of his devoted officers and men.

The Plan of Attack.—The invasion had been planned as follows: The South-west was to be penetrated from four different places, columns converging on Windhoek as the rendezvous. Botha himself would be in command of the Northern forces, operating in that part of the country which

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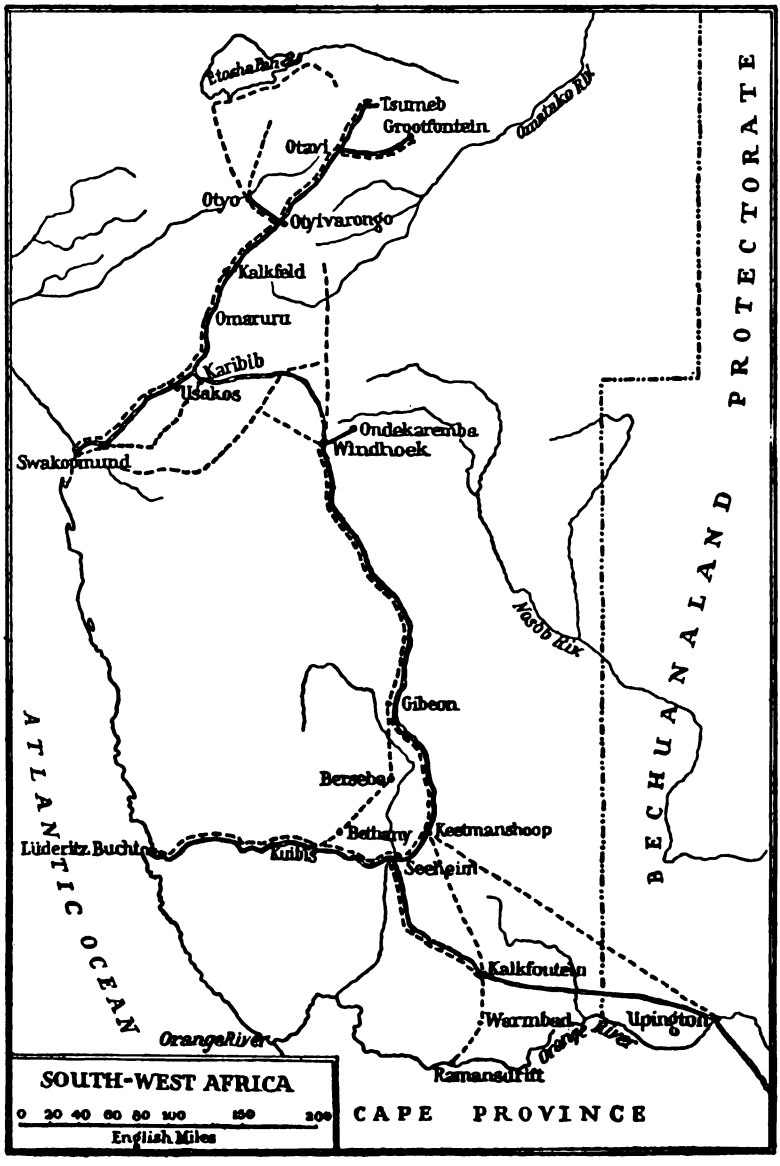
was, economically and strategically, the most important. From Swakopmund his 21,000 men (13,000 of whom were mounted) would follow the railway eastward. The other three columns would approach respectively from the south-west, the south and the south-east. On February 11, 1915, the steamer landed him at the sandy mouth of the Swakop, a river that is almost perennially dry.

Preparations took over a month, and the delay in starting had such a bad effect on Botha's health that his staff became anxious, and Mrs Botha was sent for; but when he saw, from the window of his sick-room, that the Swakop was in spate, so that the troops would be enabled to march on, the patient recovered in the twinkling of an eye! On April 15 the Northern division started its eastward march. At first it traversed the endless belt of sand that shuts off the territory so effectually on the side of the ocean. On July 9 the German Governor capitulated, more than 400 miles further inland, near the other frontier of the Protectorate. Of Botha's fifty thousand men no more than 269 were killed by bullets, disease, or accidents, while 263 were wounded. It was an extremely economical and efficient piece of work.

Botha's object was to corner, as quickly as might be, the nucleus of the enemy force, a couple of thousand strong. From experience he knew how well a guerilla war might be eked out on small means; he knew, too, what guerilla tactics meant to the attacking force. Wherever he came into touch with the enemy, he always attempted enveloping movements. On May 5 he entered Karibib, 150 miles from the seaboard, whilst the Germans were evacuating it. On May 12 Windhoek, the capital, with its wireless (150 miles from the coast), formally surrendered. To its burgomaster Botha promised, in feeling language, that non-combatants would be respected in every way. His peremptory orders not to requisition goods from Germans without a receipt were carefully obeyed.

In the middle of May railway communication with Swakopmund was restored; General Coen Brits seized Omaruru. From there, by a big *détour* through an unknown

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district, he reached Tsumeb *via* the Etosha Pan; Union troops from the South likewise got to Tsumeb, the railway terminus and final rallying-centre of the Germans. Botha, after resting his forces at Karibib, trekked north-east, taking Kalkfeld on the 24th and Otjiwarongo two days later. On June 30 his nephew, Colonel Manie Botha, occupied Otavifontein, thus completely cutting off the German commander's line of retreat. Forced marches completed the investment of the enemy. Men and horses were done up, but Botha had forced a surrender—honourable capitulation; officers and men were allowed to retain their arms; the militia were permitted to return to hearth and home. During his conversations with the German Governor Botha reported to Smuts that he had demanded the surrender of the territory—not of the German forces. " I feel," he stated " that we should not unduly hurt their military pride; you will remember how keenly we ourselves felt such matters."

Botha never nurtured any ill will against the Germans. His Government was the only one during the War that respected the private property of enemy subjects. Although, during the progress of the military operations, naturalized Germans sometimes made things awkward for him, and—to his knowledge—agitated against him, he always did what he could to protect them when the passions of the British section were roused, as sometimes they were.

When he undertook to lead the campaign, he soon found that, in the Union, data regarding South-west Africa were exceedingly scanty, even in military circles. Aggressive operations in German territory had never been contemplated. Hurriedly, maps and other intelligence were collected. During Botha's stay at Swakopmund he was able to examine an Afrikander transport-rider as well as a Cape Boy, both of whom had travelled the country in all directions; and thus he gathered expert knowledge as to water, mountain ranges, and bush. These verbal details were at once verified, and collated with cartographic information. In that way Botha's topographical knowledge of the Protec-

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AFTER THE SOUTH-WEST CAMPAIGN

The Union Buildings at Pretoria include an amphitheatre which is particularly suitable for public ceremonies. General Botha upon his return from South-west Africa was given a festive reception there toward the middle of 1915.

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torate formed so complete a mental panorama that during the concentration on Tsumeb he was able to send detailed marching-orders to General Myburgh and Colonel Alberts without consulting a map, just as if he had personally visited and explored the ground in question. During the forward movement he used to gather his staff officers round him at some elevation, asking their opinions on potential subsequent moves. Having listened, he not infrequently differed from this counsel; he would make up his mind as to where to push the attack, and what the disposal of the advanced battalions ought to be. Invariably his solution proved to be the correct one, and his hypotheses to tally with facts.

At Swakopmund.—While struggling with preparatory measures at Swakopmund he was visited (in March) by Lord Buxton, Governor-General. His Excellency was attended by an Imperial officer of high rank. Both of them advised the immediate strengthening of the division that was to invade the country from Luderitzbucht, along the southern line of railway. The commander of those troops, too, had asked for reinforcements, being convinced that the Germans would do their best to bar his progress. Botha insisted that this idea was groundless, with the argument that the Germans had abandoned all positions in that neighbourhood. The other, however, continued to press his request for more men. Botha then took ship to Luderitzbucht, and went to the place where opposition had been anticipated. He also had three thousand men sent by way of reinforcements; but when the attack at last came off, the enemy proved to have been gone for some considerable time. Botha's intuition once more corresponded with the facts of the situation.

The enforced delay at Swakopmund made Botha and his staff impatient. Waiting during relative inactivity spoilt everyone's temper. One evening, Dr Bok tells me, he and Botha had a game of chess. Bok impounded the queen. Botha, who was not a good loser at either cards or chess, made some petulant remark, at which Dr Bok refused to

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go on. The presence of an officer added to the awkwardness of the incident. For a few days there was a distinct coldness in the atmosphere, Botha confining himself to purely official matters in talking to his secretary. The latter felt compelled to put an end to the tension; as usual without knocking, he entered the General's bedroom and found him kneeling at the table in attitude of prayer. A little later, Bok went again in order to offer apologies. With tears in his eyes, Botha said that Bok's ebullition of temper had grieved him, looking as he did on the other as on a younger brother.

There was something else on his mind during the campaign. While he had to give all his attention to military matters, and was entirely sacrificing personal comfort to the prosecution of the war—being then in his fifty-third year—he heard of the anti-German riots at Johannesburg and elsewhere in the Union. Highly indignant, he had a message published, pointing out that those who were bearing the brunt of the war might reasonably expect that stay-at-homes should behave, and not indulge in lawlessness.

With Forced Marches.—The leader's wish to shorten the campaign greatly taxed the staying-powers of his mounted men who, once started, were never given the chance of a proper rest. They relentlessly pursued the enemy with forced marches. On the occupation of Otavi, when the surrender of the German troops was a question of a few days at most, Botha ordered a resumption of the march that night at ten. The A.D.C. returned, reporting that men and horses were so spent that they would most likely prove both unable and unwilling to go on. Botha replied: "Tell them I am proceeding to-night." When at ten p.m. the whistle shrilled for departure, the whole of the commando had fallen in to follow its leader.

A little while previously Botha, accompanying the forward march in a motor, had halted at a farmhouse; with an officer he entered the house. Dense clouds of dust in various directions showed that mounted men were moving at great speed. Botha had just finished a cup of coffee, when a

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BOTHA TO BRITAIN: "Carried out your wish and in accordance with our compact at Vereeniging."

A cartoon by Louis Raemakers, the original of which was presented by the artist to General Botha.

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knock was heard at the front door. The officer opened. Three German stragglers asked for a drink of water. The officer told them to enter, minus their guns. Immediately Botha began to cross-examine them, what time his A.D.C. had the German rifles removed by the chauffeur. The trio never imagined they were facing the invaders' commander-in-chief; as for Botha, he just missed the chance of being taken prisoner!

Just as had happened in the Boer war, many of the Union men asked for short home leave, even during the early stages of the campaign. Botha had a happy way of silencing these importunities by promising that leave would be given on his birthday. The men desisted, and by the end of September most of them were back in the Union.

Once the terms of capitulation had been settled Botha left for Pretoria, where there was urgent work for the Premier to despatch. On July 30, after a five months' absence, he landed at Capetown, where a great reception was given him. Not long since, the two extremist sections in the Union had looked as if they were determined to seize each other by the throat, and as if the goodwill between Briton and Boer, desired by every right-thinking person, would for ever remain a dream. There had been the possibility, too, of the South-west episode ending in a way harmful to the Union. Botha had succeeded within very little time in warding off the danger of civil war and had made the Union the most powerful country in Southern Africa, without undue expenditure in either men or funds.

The people were grateful to their Warrior-Premier for all this. Only the Nationalists stood aside. Under the caption "Botha *Triumphans*" their principal organ brought out the fact that his success had cost brother-blood. Was this a just reproach, in face of its coming from the party that subsequently repudiated the Rebellion?

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XXXVIII

BOTHA SAVES THE UNION

THE outbreak of the Great War made most of the nations affected feel the need of a truce in party politics. The example of France, where a *Union Sacrée* between all nationals was proclaimed, was emulated by other countries. South Africa adopted the opposite course. A demon of unrest ravaged the country. The armed insurrection was followed by a period of intense restlessness and excitement, during which symptoms of renewed rebellion were more than once diagnosed.

Conditions overseas promoted material progress in the Union. Factories were built; quotations for wool, coal, and maize ruled high. Owing to the departure of tens of thousands of volunteers for service overseas those who remained behind knew no unemployment. The food position caused practically no difficulty, even though the cost of living rose. Our country scarcely knew how well off it was. The disasters chastising Europe had no more than a faint echo among us. Perhaps all this goes to explain the ardent, even passionate, manner in which the population—knowing itself safe—indulged in its incessant political and economic wrangles. The war atmosphere made people self-willed as well as irritable, so that Government was hard put to it in carrying out its appointed task.

Fortunately, everyone who felt so inclined was allowed to blow off steam to his heart's content, provided no violence was used. Once or twice the Government had to appeal to the public for obedience to the law. The tension in public life invaded the family circle and the church. Parliament regularly held its, occasionally stormy, Sessions. There was a succession of party congresses, which blithely

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kept dissension alive. The censor left us with a free Press and platform; everybody aired his views, whenever he pleased. The convicted rebels were released and their political disabilities removed.

Election Bitterness.—Shortly after his return from the South-west, in the middle of 1915, Botha opened his election campaign. The second General Election after unification was destined to be held in the midst of din and friction, in the month of October. The Nationalists had their first opportunity of showing what their party could do. Botha reminded the people of what his Government had accomplished and what warded off; he pointed out the unfortunate strength of provincialism. Of those who realized the efforts it had cost to make the dead letter of the Constitution a live instrument for South African development the number was small. Among the Dutch there was a deal of extreme bitterness against Botha. His opponents simply could not fathom his attitude. Many of his old friends were now inveterate opponents. "Judas," he was called, "traitor, bloodhound, murderer!"

During these days of mental stress an incident occurred, typical of the morbid mentality of many political coteries. In 1915 pamphlets were printed in Holland, purporting to demonstrate that Botha had been a traitor in the Boer war, deceiving his people in a series of insidious acts, meant to benefit the enemy. Probably this libel, ably engineered—every country knows instances of manœuvres of this kind—was connected with the merciless propaganda maintained by Germany with no less vigour than that of her opponents. The Allies would be dealt a nasty blow if Botha's Government could be defeated in the elections. The pamphlet in question was soon refuted by a South African lawyer, Dr H. D. J. Bodenstein, then staying in Holland. He convincingly exposed the aspersions. It was not dared openly to circulate them in South Africa, but a number of pamphlets were got into the hands of Botha's opponents, who typed the contents, and were thus able to spread a good many copies of the scurrilous lampoon. With avidity the

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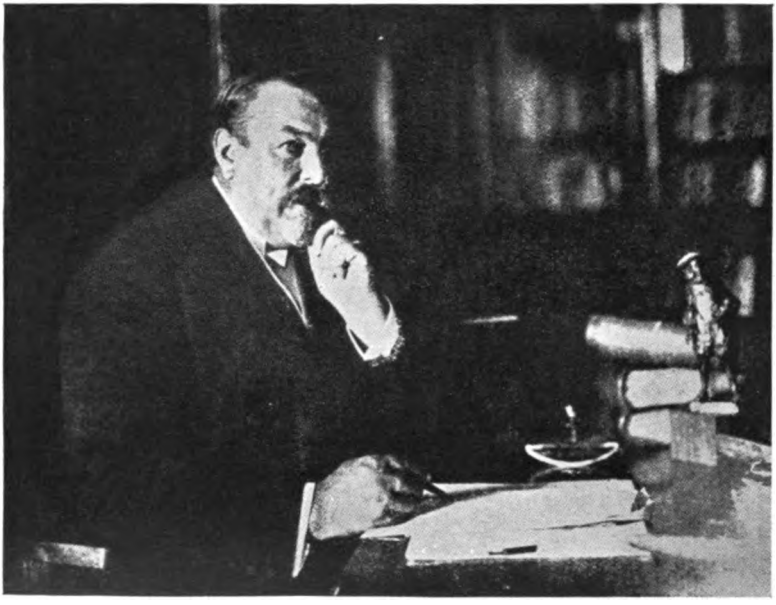
credulous, who were vindictive as well, swallowed even the most improbable abominations, as though they were pleasant stimulants.

Wild Hustings.—The election of October 1915 was distinguished by an orgy of ruthlessness and personalities, completely dividing the Dutch-speaking section into two camps. Many who ought to have known better neglected the great importance, politically, of respect for the amenities of the platform. Although Botha's speeches were marked by much greater moderation than those of the bulk of his opponents, he cannot be absolved from the charge of having sometimes made injudicious remarks. A candidate's name might have an unfamiliar ring to his ears, or perhaps some other candidate, instead of having been with the commandos during the Boer war, had been under orders to accompany President Kruger to Europe; in such cases he vented his irony on the persons concerned. His soberly conceived platform was not of the kind by which the average voter is inspired. In those days it was looked upon as a much more heroic performance to incite the constituencies against Britain—or to make them glow with enthusiasm for the same country, as the case might be—than to expound the duties of a citizen of British South Africa.

In spite of all these things, Botha's party managed to win 59 Assembly seats, 95,000 votes having been cast for its candidates. The fact that Botha was able to maintain such strength in the face of the conditions of 1915—between the upper and the nether millstones of Unionism and Nationalism—is very much to his credit. It is also a feather in the cap of the moderate section, which was responsible for the great number of votes mentioned. The balance of 71 M.L.A.'s was composed of 40 Unionists, 4 Labour men, and 27 Nationalists. Until then, the latter had had only eight members in the House. General Hertzog's adherents at the polls aggregated 77,000. About 55,000 electors had supported Unionism.

Botha wants to Resign.—The South Africa Party did not manage to get an absolute majority, and three of the

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BOTHA AT HIS DESK IN UNION BUILDINGS

Although anything but a bureaucrat, Botha acquitted himself conscientiously of his ministerial duties.

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Ministers failed to obtain re-election. Botha wanted to resign. He felt the humiliation of depending, with his dismembered Cabinet, on the support of the Unionist Party, which had criticized his policy to the last. It had, in fact, fought him every bit as hard as had the Nationalists, both because his manner of carrying on the War was considered not energetic enough and owing to his continued refusal to introduce compulsory overseas service. He remained in power, however. The argument that military considerations necessitated his continuance in office, and would guarantee his parliamentary majority (no other party being in a position to form a Government with any prospect of permanence), decided him.

In the new House the Nationalists asserted themselves as a determined Opposition. Vainly, however, they cast the net; a vote of no-confidence—in the shape of a motion, on the Estimates, to reduce the Prime Minister's salary—was negatived. Right through the War, *i.e.* during the open clash of sentiment in the Union, Parliament as a rule made but a poor show as a legislature. It is but fair to admit that in those years politicians in no single country cared much for solid legislative work. As for Botha, his impatience of criticism increased with the years, so that the heavy atmosphere of the House became even more oppressive. Lord Buxton remarks:[1]

> Botha never had the advantage of sitting in opposition, a useful experience, which enlarges the mind, expands the view, and inculcates patience. Government accumulates unpopularity, while the Opposition can do no wrong. Botha never sojourned in the wilderness, nor underwent this healthy chastening and purging.

An Unpleasant Year.—The year 1916 was an unpleasant one to Botha. At the end of 1915 his good friend and private secretary, Dr W. E. Bok, became Secretary for Justice. Shortly afterward, General Smuts left for East Africa, to take over the command. Botha, remaining Commandant-General, temporarily took the Defence portfolio as well. This doubled his official duties once again.

[1] *General Botha* (Murray).

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At the end of January a gnu on his Standerton farm killed two of his natives in a paddock containing blesbuck and gnu. This made a trip to Rusthof necessary, after which he had to go and attend the Session at Capetown. He had invited Sir Meiring Beck and Colonel Mentz to join the Cabinet, which needed fresh blood.

The Session started quietly. Members occupied themselves with consolidating legislation. His own party was disciplined as never before. To a friend he wrote: "I am amazed to see how well we are getting on, but expect trouble in Committee of Supply. My work has been greatly increased by Smuts' departure." In detail the letter described the failure of a Unionist attempt to push through extra pay for overseas troops. There were advocates of such a measure within his own ranks; the caucus debated the matter for three days:

"I saw that I was being forced, and that the division [in the Assembly] would be on racial lines. This was flying in the face of my policy so strongly that I got up [in caucus] to say that although I myself was in favour, I intended standing by the Dutch members in a division, as I could not afford to be an English leader; my place, I added, was with my 'ain folk,' but that I should resign at once. To be brief, within three minutes there was such unanimity as you have never seen. I afterwards talked matters over with Smartt; told him that I could not get the pay through, that I could not allow myself to be coerced, and that I should make such-and-such a speech. In the House he shed a few tears; our lot lay low; the Nationalists listened, mouths open and ears hanging down. From that time the barometer is set fair."

Botha had discussed the question with his Governor-General too. Lord Buxton noted down Botha's words as follows: "Their (*i.e.* the Unionists') speeches will raise trouble between English and Dutch, and they are driving my people away from me. . . . I am neither pro-Dutch nor pro-English on racial lines. I have stood out against such a policy for ten years. . . . Such a position I could not, and

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would not, tolerate," meaning that he would not divide the nation racially on the pay issue. Botha stuck to his work on behalf of conciliation, but at critical moments he never lost sight of the fact that "his place was with his ain folk"—"my people," as he said to Lord Buxton.

South Africa German?—Under his brother-in-law, General Cheere Emmett, Botha sent a labour-squad of ten thousand natives to French ports, in order to work behind the fighting line. In June he warned Durban against any recrudescence of anti-German demonstrations. At the end of the month he appeared as a witness before the Rebellion Enquiry Commission. In the middle of July he left for East Africa, where he met General Smuts. The end of August saw him at a Free State South Africa Party Congress. At Klerksdorp, in September, he stated that it would be better to fight another two years than to have to start afresh in ten years' time. Thereupon he visited the natives in Pondoland and elsewhere in the Transkei.

Then a series of meetings—first in his constituency, Losberg, and subsequently in Colesberg, Wakkerstoom, Heidelberg, Middelburg, Lydenburg. At Lake Chrissie he explained that when he used the words "carrying the war to a successful issue" he meant that he wanted to avoid South Africa becoming German. On the last day of October he spoke at Ermelo; this was an interesting occasion, because he was reported to have boasted of the extent of South Africa's independence, using as an illustration that "we could deport even an Englishman." On the same day he entered a libel action against Senator Wolmarans.

In November he visited Volksrust and Maritzburg. In December he attended the Dingaan's Day celebrations at Paardekraal (Krugersdorp), despite political complications. It was especially the Transvaalers who had continued to commemorate, every five years, the final break-up of the Zulu power by the Boers in 1838. Botha had previously expressed the wish that the next Dingaan's Day would see a revival of the ancient glory and traditional celebration. In May 1916 he appealed to the people "to confess our sins

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in concord, and pray together at the foot of the historic monument for the blessing of God on the process of unifying and saving our nation." The celebration was a success as regards attendance and organization; his political opponents, however, stayed away, feigning indignation at Botha's "roping in Paardekraal for his own purposes." Toward the end of 1916, with all its tribulations, Mrs Botha suffered from a serious illness, which caused her husband lasting anxiety. Thus Botha was depressed by mental worries and physical fatigue.

The Year 1917.—A journey in the Northern Karroo started in 1917. There was a by-election at Victoria West, and Botha's appearance helped his party to gain the day. General Smuts left for England, to serve as a member of the Imperial War Cabinet; the Prime Minister had to enlighten a suspicious public on the meaning of that move. In the Assembly there were complaints because the new Union uniform was khaki-coloured; Botha reminded hon. members that it was the late General Beyers who had chosen that shade. Nationalist orators began to talk openly of a republic. When Botha reproached General Hertzog with being a republican in name only, the Nationalist leader announced, at a Pretoria mass meeting: "I am a republican, not merely in theory, but in practice as well." His party was working for secession from the Empire.

During the Session Botha addressed meetings at Stellenbosch, Malmesbury, and Robertson, but in the middle of July he had to hand over to Mr F. S. Malan the duties of the Premiership in order to take rest. During the second half of September his libel action against Senator Wolmarans was fought out at Pretoria. The defendant had, at a meeting in the Pretoria district in October 1916, charged Botha with fraudulently altering a map of the South-west border, with boasting of the killing of rebels, and, finally, with having acted as the hanger-on ("*kalfakter*") in the old Transvaal Volksraad of a deputy whose national sentiments were rather suspect. Mr Wolmarans instituted a claim in reconvention, on the ground that Botha, in

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September 1916, had reflected at a Losberg meeting on the defendant's physical courage. The hearing lasted a couple of days, ending with the withdrawal by both parties of all libellous matter; the defendant consented to judgment for costs in plaintiff's favour. This incident characterizes the acerbity of feeling that was disfiguring public life, making it all but intolerable. At the end of 1917 Botha addressed meetings at Ventersdorp, Potchefstroom, and Johannesburg.

Heightened Tension.—Things were going badly in Europe, which heightened tension in South Africa. At a recruiting conference held in Johannesburg Botha emphatically reiterated his refusal to commandeer. A few days previously "God save the King" had been sung in the Assembly, led by a Durban member, which induced a fellow-legislator to inquire whether he had permission to intone the old Free State anthem. Shortly afterward a Unionist member called his Nationalist colleagues "spies."

The seizure of mercantile shipping from Holland by the British Government caused ill-feeling in South Africa; Botha, in a confidential letter to General Smuts, said, *i.a.*:

"The question of the ships from Holland is getting to be highly inconvenient for us here. The Nationalists seem to be much better posted than I am. Their information, of course, comes from the consulates. What I do not like is the prospect of Anglo-Dutch friction, and I want to ask you to do your utmost in order to maintain friendly relations. The greater England's friendship with Holland, the easier it becomes to uphold the Empire in South Africa. There is a tender feeling in the Union for Holland, and I should very much like you to send me an urgent cable in case of trouble, for I should greatly appreciate having an opportunity of offering some advice in a matter of that sort."

South Africa's Prime Minister felt deeply conscious of his claim to be heard in London and convinced that his scope included international affairs by which the Empire might be affected. He advocated the maintenance of good relations between England and Holland, because that would serve not only Imperial interests but accord with South

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African sentiment as well. As far back as 1918 the Union pulled its weight in issues that were being settled in the Old World, no less than six thousand miles away.

How hectic political conditions were during this period is evident from the assault at Capetown on General Hertzog; from repeated assurances made by politicians to the public that Botha's hands and arms, up to the elbows, were dripping with blood; from reproaches as to half-heartedness levelled at the Dutch section—answered by Botha in the Assembly with the reminder that no one could expect Afrikanders to be quite so bellicose as the British. On July 5 the Government felt constrained to appeal to the people to maintain law and order. In the middle of October an appeal was made for a large consignment of mealies, as a present to Holland. Shortly afterward we had our share of the influenza epidemic, coinciding with the collapse of the Central Powers.

The War was over. Toward the end of the year Botha left for England in order to take part in the Peace negotiations.

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XXXIX

BOTHA AT PARIS AND VERSAILLES

ALFRED ZIMMERN's interesting book, *The Third Empire*, published in 1926, contains the following passage:

> I well remember a certain day in December 1918 when, as I was working in my room in the British Foreign Office, somebody entered in a condition of much excitement, and told us that Canada wished to be represented at the Peace Conference and was even taking an interest in the League of Nations. It was very inconvenient. What was the Foreign Office to do?

There is no reason to doubt the occurrence. Such a statement, however, conveys a totally erroneous impression. The British Government could not very well be either surprised or displeased, at the end of the Great War, at the Dominions' desire for complete international status. London had been the scene of numerous conversations between members of the British Government and Dominion Cabinet Ministers visiting the metropolis on the new aspect of Imperial relations in the event of victory.

In 1917-18 the big hotels in the Strand frequently had such guests as Sir Robert Borden, Mr Meighen, and other prominent Canadians, Mr Hughes and Sir Joseph Cook (Australia), Mr Massey and Sir Joseph Ward (New Zealand), Mr Lloyd (Newfoundland), Mr Henry Burton, and General Smuts. Mr Massey, it appeared on notes being compared, was very 'English.' Mr Lloyd George and Mr Churchill were not enthusiastic over the prospect of seeing the Dominions figure as separate Powers at the Peace Conference table. Lord Milner, on the other hand, had abandoned his old 'proconsular' ideas about Empire structure in favour of those held by Sir Robert Borden,

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General Botha, and General Smuts. These men were opposed to federalism and an Imperial Parliament. They wanted frank recognition of an autonomous international status, which the military prowess of the Dominions during the War had justified.

"No one outside a lunatic asylum wants to force these young nations into any particular mould," General Smuts had said in London as far back as April 1917. It was plain that a new Imperial life was stirring in embyro, long before the Allies dictated peace terms to the Central Powers. At the time of the Armistice the ground had been well prepared—except, perhaps, as far as the Foreign Office was concerned—for public proclamation of the new Dominion status in international law. Together, the 'Colonies' had mobilized a million men and hundreds of millions of pounds. There could be no idea of any bombshell effect in Downing Street about their rank at the Conference.

As a result of strenuous efforts throughout the Empire the need for closer consultation on matters of strategy was felt. This led to the Imperial War Cabinet—not to be confused with the War Cabinet of Great Britain—which was inaugurated in April 1917. It had a "wider purpose, jurisdiction and personnel," as Sir Robert Borden remarked.

> We meet as equals, each responsible to the respective Parliaments. Each nation preserves unimpaired its perfect autonomy, its self-government and the responsibility of its Ministers to their own electorate. With the institution of the Imperial War Cabinet a new page of history had been written. It announced the birth of a new and greater Imperial Commonwealth.

Botha was quite *au fait* when, having been summoned to Europe, he landed in December 1918. On January 11 following he and General Smuts arrived in Paris as members of the British Delegation, two months after the Armistice.

I well remember a conversation during which General Botha indicated correctly what the new position amounted to. He was fully conscious of the status occupied by South Africa among the "Allied and Associated Powers" and

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within the frame of the League of Nations, for which General Smuts—to the entire satisfaction of President Wilson—had recently drafted the Covenant.

On January 18 the first formal meeting of some seventy representatives of the victors took place. Fourteen came from the United Kingdom and its "oversea possessions." This was a term, still current in chancelleries, but quite antiquated as far as the facts were concerned. America, France, and Japan only had five members each. This was the first tangible demonstration of the fact that the Empire, as constituted when war was declared, had ceased to exist. When peace was signed at Versailles on June 28 the world beheld a new 'Empire,' of a kind hitherto unknown. The last vestige of Dominion subjection to the United Kingdom had vanished.

Botha's Influence.—Originally all the members of the British Delegation were kept abreast of the course of negotiations, the scope of which before long became so overwhelming that the full delegation was only convened by Mr Lloyd George on special occasions. Beyond these, every member found his own way.

At an early date the Union obtained rights over South-west Africa amounting to virtual annexation, subject to restrictions of a military nature and to protection of the aborigines against alcohol and conscription. As to these restrictions South Africa was to be responsible, as a mandatory, to the League.

At one time it was thought that the German colonies would be simply annexed by the powers concerned. Sir Robert Borden, it is said, was in favour of their being handed to the United States. The Supreme Council, however, had already adopted a line of policy; and the mandatory system was introduced in international law. On May 7, 1919, South-west Africa was allotted to the Union of South Africa. Germany ceded its territory to the Supreme Council, which put certain States in charge, partly with unconditional authority, partly under conditions that included control of the League of Nations, but with

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sovereign power to the mandatories for "C" territories—*in casu*, South-west Africa.

Mr George Barnes, in his Reminiscences,[1] tells us:

> One meeting at the rooms of Mr Balfour lingers in my mind, because of the intervention of General Botha. General Botha was a great man. Never made any long speeches, but his presence in any gathering could be felt. What little he had to say was always to the point; and always on the side of a long and generous view of things. Botha sat next to Lord Milner, and put in a plea for clemency.

Perhaps the allusion is to Botha's attitude toward the scheme, fathered by Mr. Lloyd George, of citing the Kaiser, together with others who were regarded as war criminals, before an International Court. During the 1918 general election in Britain Mr Lloyd George had been most successful at the booths with the cry of " Hang the Kaiser! "

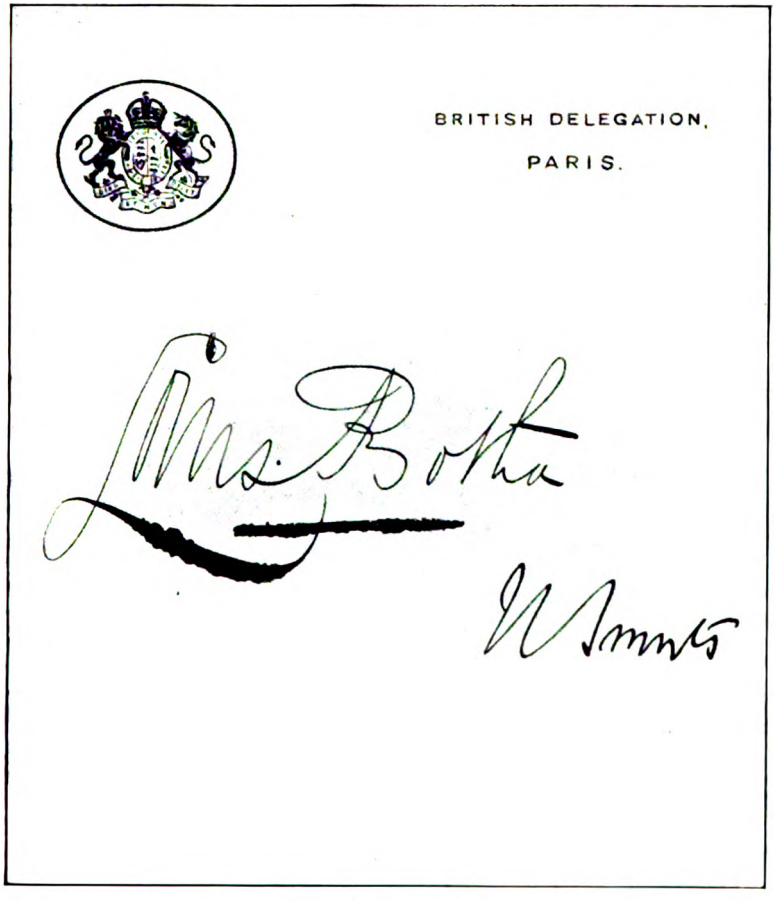
This induced him to press his claim in Paris. Mr Hughes, the Australian Premier, supported him, but Botha opposed the unwise scheme. He pointed to events in South Africa, where the return to a peaceful frame of mind after the Boer war had been greatly assisted by the cancellation of wholesale prosecution of Cape and Natal rebels. As long as war criminals were 'smelt out,' he argued, Europe would know no peace. He advised speedy prosecution in a very small number of really flagrant cases.

The Beggar turned Prince.—The Botha spirit won the day. The Treaty provided for proceedings against the Kaiser; extradition by the Netherlands Government was demanded, but not insisted upon when the answer proved to be a refusal. Mr Lloyd George, however, was able to face his supporters with a clear conscience. It was not due to him that the Kaiser remained unhung!

Twenty years before, William II had turned away Paul Kruger. He had failed to invite the three Boer generals, when on a begging mission to Berlin, to his palace. What he had done was to offer Queen Victoria a plan of campaign against the Boer Republics. What would he have said had

[1] *Workshop to War Cabinet* (Jenkins).

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BOTHA'S SIGNATURE

Until the end this bore indications of strength of will, as appears in this example from Botha's Paris Peace Conference papers.

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anyone then predicted that one of the three beggars would cast away vindictiveness far enough to save his Majesty from a halter woven for his august neck by a British Cabinet?

Some French generals wanted a triumphal entry into Berlin. Botha, with equal success, advised against such a waste of military energy. At one of the meetings of the British delegates to the Conference, where terms were discussed, Botha strongly opposed any pin-prick policy. "My soul has felt the harrow," he exclaimed; "I know what it means." Mr Robert Lansing, the American Secretary of State, who knew Botha in those days, wrote a few years later :

> Botha was essentially logical and unemotional in whatever he said or did. The enthusiasm of the visionary made no headway with him. Reason and facts were what appealed to him. He looked forward to the final judgment of men, and not to the temporary popularity which a policy might gain under the stress of exciting conditions, or the passing emotions of an aroused public opinion. He possessed that foresight which sees the end at the beginning and prevents the adoption of a course which may be disastrous, or unwise, or of doubtful expediency.

No wonder that Botha felt anything but comfortable in the atmosphere of the Conference, with its short-sighted egoism, its reckless intoxication of victory and injudicious scramble for immediate gain.

In complete disregard of the Western armistice, fighting went on cheerfully in Eastern Europe. Poland and the Ukraine—afterward part of the Federated Soviet Republics—were hammering away at each other to their hearts' content. The Ukraine had befriended the Ruthenians, who were hereditary enemies to the Poles. This humiliating state of affairs was noticed by President Wilson. Before the end of January Botha was approached with a view to becoming chairman of a Peace Commission, to be designated by the Great Powers; but he became seriously ill from influenza. The "Big Four" then sent a few emissaries to Eastern Galicia, the venue of continued strife. These

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succeeded in patching up a peace which, unfortunately, lasted but a few days!

The Supreme Council then intervened. America, the British Empire, France, and Italy contributed two delegates each to a Commission that was to engineer an armistice. Botha, asked by Mr Lloyd George to serve, accepted the invidious distinction. He felt that his own country's interests demanded of him that he should be instrumental in assuring the success of Allied diplomacy. No genuine co-operation between the four elements of the Commission could, however, be anticipated, and this rendered Botha's task an unpleasant one. He had systematically declined private visits from representatives of the countries concerned or from agents of the threatened interests, and he listened to their arguments only when formulated at the Commission's meetings.

At the first sitting in the Foreign Office at the Quai d'Orsay, late in April 1919, Botha was elected chairman. Eight more meetings took place, at which Poland, the Ukraine, and Lithuania pressed their claims. One of the most interesting figures was the famous Paderewski, then the Polish premier.

Each of the deputations covered the Conference table with huge maps in support of their mutually incompatible territorial demands. At last a draft armistice was concocted and laid before the Poles and Ukrainians on May 12. A typical provision was that while the armistice lasted neither party should confer oil concessions!

The Ukraine accepted. Poland refused on 'military' grounds. The Commission reported to the Supreme Council, which gave the refractory Polish dictator Pilsudski a warning. His troops, however, continued the occupation of Galicia, with an eye to the oilfields. On June 25—only a few days before Versailles—the Council approved a compromise in favour of Poland. Prior to these events it had been decided to send a few people in authority to Warsaw to make an attempt at getting the contestants to come together.

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Sir W. Beauchamp and Sir William Orpen.—Botha was one of them. Although by no means in robust health, he was prepared to undertake the railway journey—anything but a picnic in those halcyon days. He was determined to do his duty to the bitter end, without regard to comfort or even personal safety. At the eleventh hour the journey was baulked by Mr Brebner, his private secretary, and myself, a temporary member of Botha's staff during his stay in Paris. Just a few weeks previously I had accompanied General Smuts to Budapest on a mission to Bela Kun, the Bolshevist dictator of Hungary, and thus gained an opportunity of realizing how much the old dictum that Europe ceases east of Vienna and Berlin remained true—at any rate during the period immediately after the War. We got Sir W. Beauchamp, the doctor attached to the British Delegation, to veto Botha's onerous undertaking in view of the serious attack of influenza from which he had recently suffered. Mrs Botha, who happened to be on the spot, supported us.

It was not without some trouble that we managed to dissuade the General. His weakening constitution even then began to cause anxiety. A portrait had been done of him by Sir William Orpen, who had fixed up a temporary studio in an hotel near the Arc de Triomphe. Sir William had, with admirable artistic success, painted among those who came to assist the Conference many a famous statesman, diplomat, and warrior. Mrs Botha, one fine morning, took me to the studio, as she was thus far dissatisfied with the result of the artist's efforts. She wanted me to tell Sir William that I, too, disapproved. The canvas shocked me! Inspired by acute vision, native to the true painter, Orpen had with unconsciously cruel brush emphasized the fatigue and worry whose signs were showing in Botha's normally virile features. Orpen did not finish the portrait. A second effort gave more satisfaction.

A month after the Conference opened Belgium induced the Supreme Council to appoint a Commission—presided over by M. Tardieu, the French statesman—in order to

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examine the changes in the Belgian position among the nations. The famous "guarantee" of Belgium's neutrality had been consigned to limbo. It was especially desired to clarify Belgium's relations with Holland. In those days Paris was not well disposed toward Scandinavia, Spain, Switzerland, and Holland. Some even advocated a considerable levy on these neutrals for the benefit of the victors! Brussels demanded from Holland part of the latter's territory, including the mouth of the Scheldt, on which river Antwerp is situated. Belgium had no objection to Holland being indemnified by the incorporation of German districts!

France enthusiastically seconded. The neutrals were, of course, not represented at the Conference. They were pretty well defenceless against the decisions of the Supreme Council, which had taken upon itself the task of readjusting the affairs of dismembered Europe. The Tardieu Commission approved the Belgian demands in principle, and advocated the scheme before the Supreme Council. There, it was strongly opposed by President Wilson. Mr Lloyd George was quite prepared to deal with the question of navigation on the Scheldt, but refused to countenance any territorial transactions.

It was a time of flux; dozens of weird boundaries were being created, and Belgium's aggressive temper might have triumphed—which would have caused serious trouble—but for the vigilance of the South African delegates. They contested any unwarrantable inroads on the integrity of Holland, and the Dutch Foreign Secretary, Jhr. van Karnebeek, obtained an opportunity of consulting Generals Botha and Smuts, and of addressing the Supreme Council. It was pleasant to have been able to reduce the number of Paris blunders in 1919 by one at least. Two years previously General Smuts had managed, on General Botha's cabled initiative, to smooth over difficulties in connexion with the export of gravel from Holland for the repair of Belgian roads occupied by Germany. England had protested against this traffic, holding that the gravel was utilized "for military purposes."

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The two Union Ministers were in friendly contact with General Fréire d'Andrade and other Portuguese delegates in Paris, on the subject of Mozambique. Their recall to Lisbon, from where other experts were sent to take their places, prevented concrete results being obtained.

Speaking generally, the two South African delegates promoted the Dominion view that Imperial interests were not likely to be served by uncalled-for British intervention in the tangled skein of Continental politics.

Enter, of a sudden, General Hertzog's famous Independence deputation from South Africa! The visit was a brief one. It failed to attract notice amid the spasmodic tension that characterized the hotels and flats where the innumerable delegations were accommodated until the day of peace. The uncertainty regarding Germany's willingness to sign the Treaty maintained anxiety. No one troubled about the South African situation, which was considered a closed chapter. Botha took steps to facilitate the deputation's access to Mr Lloyd George—in those days no easy task. Without this, their journey might have been entirely in vain. The deputation concentrated on the British Prime Minister, since in theory the only body competent to amend the South Africa Act was the Parliament at Westminster. General Hertzog took no trouble to meet Botha.

A bronze plaque, in memory of the South Africans who had fought on the Somme, was placed in the Amiens Cathedral on Botha's initiative. He also commissioned the sculptor Achard to finish the monument to the late President Kruger that now adorns a square at Rustenburg.

A dramatic surprise awaited Botha in London as the day for the signing of the Treaty drew near. General Smuts, quite unexpectedly, told him by telephone that, after due deliberation, he had decided to leave! He did not want to place his signature under the document. The reputation of President Wilson's versatile lieutenant on the League of Nations was such that his refusal would have created a great sensation. Botha left for Paris post-haste on hearing the news. In General Smuts's suite in the Hotel Majestic I

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found a batman industriously packing the General's trunks. Smuts remained inflexible. Botha, however, knew how to appeal to him.

"Surely, you won't desert now!" he said. Together they visited Mr Lloyd George, to whom, as one of the spiritual fathers of the Treaty, the refusal to sign was anything but flattering. General Smuts mentioned a public protest, in case he had to place his name to the document. Mr Lloyd George replied, "Very well, sign first, and then protest afterwards, if protest you must."

And so it happened. The day after Versailles General Smuts's clamorous protest was launched as a vigorous indictment—the first critical review of a disappointing effort to convert chaos into order.

Among all the men who, on June 28, 1919, figured in the Hall of Mirrors, Botha and Smuts were probably the only two, with the exception of Marshal Foch, who had faced the enemy in the field. The others were politicians or diplomats. The Allied pomp and glory attendant upon Germany's military and economic downfall and humiliation had no charm for the two Boers. In the course of their heroic careers each had tasted more intense distress as well as exaltation than any other member of the Conference. They were not a bit proud of its results. Nothing but steady pressure had induced General Smuts to enter an appearance.

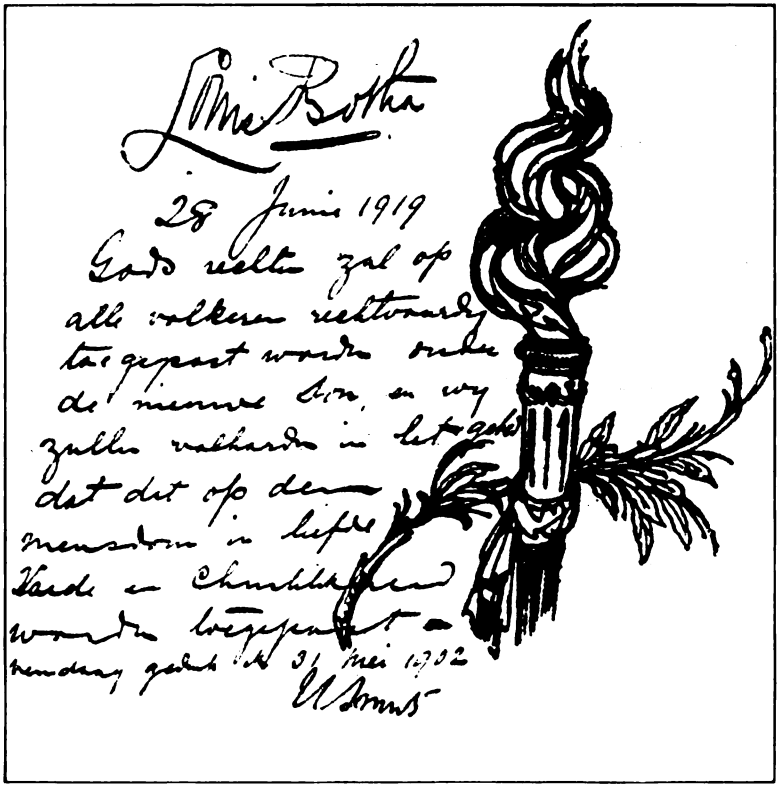
As for Botha's inmost thoughts during the solemn formalities of signing, they wandered back to a grievous peace scene full of heartrending touches. . . . Under the influence of his emotion, seizing his agenda paper, he scrawled on it the following words:

"God's justice will be meted out to every nation in His righteousness, under the new Sun. We shall persist in prayer in order that it may be done unto mankind in peace and Christian charity.

"To-day, the 31st of May 1902 comes back to me."

Vereeniging was haunting Versailles!

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THE LINES WRITTEN BY BOTHA ON HIS AGENDA PAPER AT THE SIGNING OF THE PEACE TREATY AT VERSAILLES

See translation in text.

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XL

BOTHA'S LAST DAYS

FOUR days after the Versailles ceremony Botha sailed from Southampton; he had ardently longed for the day when he should be able to return to his country, where he landed on July 24, 1919. The three weeks did not restore him to health; on the contrary, serious symptoms developed, and the patient had to lay up. Mrs Botha behaved pluckily. To me, as a fellow-passenger, the journey was one of anxiety and forebodings. Botha used to sit in an isolated corner of the lower deck, deep in thought. At times I would do my best to lead his mind back to the great, old days, but he could think of nothing except recent events affecting South Africa. Although he entirely failed to apprehend the probability of an early death, he quite realized that he was not going to make old bones. Satisfied with what he had lately been able to accomplish, he was anticipating his return with cheerfulness, glad at the prospect of delivering at home the message of independence, obtained by his beloved country within the ranks of a commonwealth of free States. This exaltation gave him the physical strength called for by the fatiguing programme that he would have to go through immediately the unpleasant sea voyage ended.

A Thankful South Africa.—Both he and General Smuts—who arrived from Europe a week later—were given a series of cordial ovations by the people; at Capetown first, and then at Pretoria, Johannesburg, and, finally, Bloemfontein, where a South Africa Party congress was held. Public receptions and banquets were the order of the day; numerous addresses of welcome were read. On August 8 every town and district of the Transvaal contributed its quota to the

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multitude that crowded the open-air amphitheatre at Union Buildings, Pretoria. There Botha stated: "Thank God, my health is better than it was when I left for the Conference; as long as my country has need of me, I shall continue to serve."

The Peace Treaty was dealt with by him, at Capetown, as follows: "It contains, to my mind, several points that are uncalled-for, superfluous, and impracticable." At Johannesburg, where 700 people attended a banquet on August 13, he voiced his satisfaction at seeing "those who were once chasing each other in South Africa, sitting round one and the same table."

At Bloemfontein he declared himself convinced that "reunion—of the South Africa and Nationalist Parties—was essential, now that the War was a thing of the past. Any racial policy would be fatal. Responsibility rested with the moderates." In all his speeches he emphasized that membership of the League of Nations had made the new Dominion status a tangible fact, establishing inter-imperial as well as international equality of position as between Great Britain and the autonomous Dominions, voluntarily constituting the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Noisy Cynics.—An interesting situation arose. His antagonists pertinently refused to believe him and General Smuts. They either would not, or could not, adapt their minds to the outstanding facts of the new situation, preferring to heap noisy ridicule and demonstrative amusement on it. The Nationalists felt in duty bound to save the face of their deputation, which had a little while previously asked Lloyd George for an anachronistic restoration of the South African Republics A.D. 1899; whereas Botha had assisted in making the 1919 Union into an instrument for the generation of future strength. The sincerity, or assumed hesitation, of Nationalist leaders affected their followers, inasmuch as they aspired to the conversion of the Union into a republic, looking for their highest ideals in a separatist, self-contained, national existence. The most recent phase of British-Imperial evolution, consummated in Paris,

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LOUIS BOTHA

From a photograph taken not long before his death. 328

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had travelled so far beyond the scope of the ingrained notions of the rank-and-file that it was really necessary to give them time for the ingestion of Botha's message; the process of digestion was bound to take even longer.

Natal, too, was impatiently awaiting an opportunity of rendering homage to the duumvirate, whose extraordinary personality compelled respect, even though it was not given to everyone to grasp the motives guiding their statesmanship. On the way to Maritzburg Botha made a short stay at Rusthof in order to have a look at his estate. He had entered upon the journey with a slight cold. At the small Rusthof station a gang of labourers was at work; when the men heard of his arrival they wished to hail him. It was a bleak, High Veld, winter's day, and the brief meeting in the biting wind affected him. Instead of being able to continue his journey to Natal, he had to return to Pretoria, a sick man. On his arrival he was ordered absolute rest by his doctor.

A Gentle Death.—Late in the afternoon of Tuesday, August 26, 1919, Botha took to his bed, without there being any suspicion, on the part of either himself, his family, or his doctor, of worse to come. In the gloaming I paid a short visit; Mrs Botha invited me to come to dinner some evening, "as soon as Louis is well again." The doctor took me home in his car; undisturbed by any anxiety, we discussed the pathological aspect of the Premier's condition, without the slightest presentiment of the blow that was to descend on us so soon.

Twelve hours later, in the early morning of August 27, I was one of the first to whisper a few words of condolence to the widow. General Louis Botha never woke from his slumber; he breathed his last shortly before midnight. In the dead face I recognized the well-known, friendly expression, besides the will-power still delineated in his countenance. His bulky frame had shrunk to almost youthful slenderness.

Before I had left the house of death, General and Mrs Smuts were announced. The General had been informed

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at Heidelberg station, on his return from Durban; he hurried on by special train-engine. The burden, borne by Botha with exemplary patience for so many years, was largely to rest on General Smuts' shoulders; almost he envied his friend's gentle passage to rest eternal.

The news of Botha's sudden demise came with crushing effect on the great mass of the people. During the last few weeks he had figured at many meetings. He had looked vigorous, cheerful, full of energy and the zest of life! The precipitancy of death, as ever, impressed the multitude. To this was added spontaneous appreciation of the fact that it had been Botha's personal magnetism above all things to which South Africa owed its salvation from social and political decay during the Great War.

Was the vacant place going to be filled? Few people were able, at the time, to realize how welcome to Botha himself must have been his passing at a period of nothing but occasion for thankfulness and satisfaction. To him was vouchsafed the great privilege of departing this life at the very height of his ambition as a South African.

Interment took place at Pretoria on August 30, amidst phenomenal manifestations of heartfelt sympathy. The ceremony was purely religious; the evidences of public mourning accompanying it were of eloquent intensity. There were, of course, the usual official condolences. From distant lands, from unexpected nooks, expressions of admiration for Botha's fine and noble qualities were received.

Louis Botha reached the age of fifty-seven. His life was made up of a greater number of noble acts and was richer in soul-stirring experiences than the lives of the majority of his contemporaries would appear to have been.

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XLI

BOTHA AND GENERAL SMUTS

At the end of the eighteenth century the German people were fortunate in possessing two men who, by their soaring minds and extraordinary gifts, riveted general attention. Thus it was that, among the public, a controversy arose: Which is the greater, Goethe or Schiller? Goethe, hearing of this, exclaimed, "Why all this noise? Rather rejoice that Germany has produced two men equally prominent."

South Africa could point to several remarkable figures during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Without in any way detracting from the appreciation that is the just due of all these, many of their contemporaries rendered high honour to General Botha and General Smuts. As a unique duumvirate they will permanently adorn the political records of the Union. Their talent for harmonious co-operation, year after year and in critical circumstances, evokes our admiration. The German nation has commemorated Goethe and Schiller in a joint monument at Weimar, showing these two hand in hand. The time will come when our country will similarly pay its just tribute to its most attractive couple of national heroes.

General Smuts was eight years younger than Botha. Unlike Botha, who enjoyed an untrammelled youth, Smuts had to fight his way through the circumscribed existence of a law student. From the moment his exceptional intellectual gifts were discovered, he had, willy-nilly, to abandon ancestral farm life. He had to pass many examinations and cram himself with knowledge. In this he succeeded wonderfully well. He was easily Botha's superior in regard to culture.

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In Botha, however, he found matter-of-fact observation, strength of will, a capacity for unlimited sacrifice in his country's cause, and profound altruism. As a statesman, Botha was not quite so careful, although equally far-seeing. What Smuts was able to accomplish, thanks to his trained intellect, Botha achieved by sheer intuition.

Botha's First Disciple.—When they began to co-operate in the task of government, many people thought that General Smuts's was essentially the creative mind, whose initiative explained the Botha figure. This impression is a wrong one, except in the region of professional accomplishment, which to Botha was a closed book. As regards all great problems, such as South Africa's Imperial status, the Native question, finance, education, military organization, Botha formed independent opinions. The longer the two men worked together, the closer became their tacit undertaking to keep their parallel orbits available for the building up of a great future for South Africa.

They well understood the art of consultation in cases of disagreement. Many other members of the same party, on the other hand, were fond of publicly advertising differences of opinion between themselves and their 'leader.' Botha and Smuts mutually felt the need of each other in public life. Neither ever looked upon the bond of co-operation as in any way irksome to himself or to the other.

General Smuts was one of the first to be taken into Botha's confidence as regards the policy of peace in South Africa, and who at once fathomed as well as furthered it.

Thus their friendship arose. Not many people are capable of extending, or receiving, fellowship. Only a few, therefore, have experienced the mutually ennobling effects of such friendship. It is not correct—either in the case of Botha and Smuts or generally—to suppose that friends necessarily agree on all points. Does not harmony flow from the solution of discords?

A Wonderful Combination.—Socially there never was much intimacy between the two men. Each had his family, his domestic interests, his business to attend to. Botha, by

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way of recreation, liked a quiet game of bridge. To Smuts such pleasures appeared unimaginable waste of valuable time! It was his habit to pore over books and documents for hours at a stretch. Botha was fond of a chat. He regarded landscape with the eye of a cattle farmer; Smuts looked at it as a naturalist. Botha's policy of conciliation was a symptom of his philanthropy; Smuts's League of Nations Covenant was the creation of a virtuoso in the sphere of constitutional law. Botha's intellectual biography might be compressed into a single monumental chapter; General Smuts's runs into periods, embracing whole phases of mental endeavour.

Politically the two constantly influenced each other. Smuts's Transvaal Education Act (1907) owed its conception to Botha's broad-minded ideas regarding free primary education and mother-tongue instruction for all.

When the suffragette movement in England had its reactions among South African women, General Smuts wrote to Mr Merriman:

> I note what you say about Botha's speeches in regard to suffrage for women. I do not understand Botha seriously to advocate this measure. He has never yet spoken to me about the matter, but I shall warn him to be careful. Afrikanders are conservative, and will resent these revolutionary innovations.

This opinion, be it noted, is twenty years old. The frankness with which General Smuts tells a third person about his intention to chide his friend is characteristic proof that both men were without the conceit that easily causes irritation. No petty jealousy ever vitiated their relations. On Botha's return from South-west Africa in 1915 the Union paid its grateful homage. Early in 1917 General Smuts returned from the East African campaign. Botha wrote from Capetown to a friend: "Oom Jannie is due to-morrow. I am glad Pretoria did him so well. We are going to give him a fine reception here." Simple words, these, showing that not a vestige of jealousy existed.

Reciprocal Appreciation.—The same high standard we get in a letter from General Smuts to Mr Merriman, written on

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March 4, 1907, the day the Transvaal Cabinet was sworn: "I might have been Premier, but considered it would be a mistake to take precedence over Botha, who is really one of the first men South Africa has ever produced."

This eulogy was not without its intention. At the Cape the impression prevailed that Botha might be, say, a good soldier, but that he still had to prove his mettle as a statesman.

On his part Botha never found it hard to praise, either privately or publicly, his trusted lieutenant. At the end of 1914, when the rebellion was over, he publicly stated: "Nobody can appreciate sufficiently the great work General Smuts has done. It has been greater than any other man's throughout this unhappy period. He was at his post day and night. His brilliant intellect, his amazing energy, his undaunted courage have been assets of inestimable value to the Union in the hour of trial."

Frequently, when one or other of them was asked for a decision, the answer would be, "Wait until I've seen Smuts," or, "I first want to get Botha's opinion." I rather suspect Botha of occasionally using such a phrase in order to make his decision weightier, once it was notified, even when he had forgotten to make the consultation! Once he said to me, "I am really disappointed myself, but Smuts refuses." It sounded like a business man recognizing that certain transactions depend for their practicability on agreement among partners.

The most notable instance of Botha and Smuts differing occurred at the signature of the Versailles Treaty, when Smuts at first refused to sign, whereas Botha considered the signature desirable, even though he did not admire the document. Smuts, while yielding to Botha, at once published his famous protest after having signed the Treaty. He deserves credit for independent action, when feeling that he was both entitled and obliged to act on his own responsibility.

During the phenomenally difficult second half of 1914 General Smuts, acting as Minister of Defence, invariably

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used his own judgment regarding the manner in which martial law was to be applied. Nothing but his initiative prevailed. Botha therefore was not consulted in connexion with the execution of Japie Fourie—the only rebel who was condemned to death, and suffered the extreme penalty. From Botha's words, just quoted, it appears nevertheless that he did not oppose the step. On the evening of the day when Fourie was made a prisoner, Botha and his wife left Pretoria for their Rusthof home. The stationmaster was the first man to enlighten him as to the capture of Fourie. On Sunday evening—the execution had taken place in the early morning—he returned to Pretoria; he had paid a visit to his son's farm, and efforts to communicate with him by telephone did not succeed.

Botha, while keeping up a fairly regular correspondence with President Steyn, seldom wrote to General Smuts, even during long periods of absence. When Botha began to indite long screeds, one might regard the fact as *prima facie* evidence of there being something wrong . . . on the other side.

Once, after Botha's death, when the 1902 conciliation policy was mentioned, General Smuts said to me: " Botha's line remained absolutely consistent. No one else in South Africa could have stuck it out. You wanted a man for that, very broad-minded, large-hearted. People may say that he went too far in that direction, but it is a policy that helped South Africa over its worst stile. It was quite on the cards that, after the Boer war, the bad, old policy would revive. Botha managed to wean the people of that."

What Robert Lansing said.—Mr Lansing, American State Secretary, met Botha in Paris. This is what he says:[1]

> A less broad-minded and far-seeing statesman than the Transvaal General would have kept alive a spirit of revenge among his countrymen and counselled passive resistance to the British authorities, thus making amalgamation between the two nationalities a long and painful process. That would have been a very natural course to take. It would have conformed with the common conception

[1] *The Big Four* (Hutchinson).

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> of patriotism and the usual sentiment of the vanquished toward the victors, but it did not conform with General Botha's views as to what was wise and practical. He may have regretted, and doubtless did regret, the outcome of the war, . . . but he did not permit vain regrets or false hopes to cloud his vision as to the future or to impair his sound common sense in dealing with new conditions resulting from the British victory. . . . He accepted the fact of defeat with philosophic calmness and exerted all his influence in reconciling his fellow-countrymen to their new allegiance.

Botha's Life-work.—In the accomplishment of his life's task, Botha found in Smuts a convinced and enthusiastic helper. Funeral orations, apart from artistic merit, usually have small value as historical material. What Smuts said at Botha's grave may be counted an exception: "He had no equal as a friend. We have worked together intimately for twenty-one years without intermission. We came together with a closeness seldom vouchsafed to friends. This entitles me to call him the greatest, cleanest, sweetest soul of all the land—of all my days. Great in his lifetime, he was happy in his death. To his friend is left the bitter task of burying him, and to defend his works, which were almost too heavy for him to perform."

Six days later, when the Assembly met again, General Smuts said: "To the strength of a man Botha joined the loving-kindness, the tenderness of a woman. He was extremely human as regards sympathy and character. Massive sympathy is what he felt for his fellow-man."

When Botha, in the district of Vryheid, took leave of his staff officers in 1902, he said to them: "The day on which they lower my body into the grave will be the day when rest will be mine." Literally, this prophecy came true.

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